



THE NOVELLINO

OF

Masuccio

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND



"A Jealous Freak."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.

The Novellino

OF

Masuccio



NOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY W. G. WATERS



VOLUME II



London:

Privately Printed for Members of the Aldus Society

M · C · M · IV

florentine Edition

*This edition of the Aldus Classics is limited to twelve hundred
and fifty numbered and registered copies, of which this is
Number 540*

Contents

	PAGE.
<u>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</u>	<u>xiii</u>
<u>PART THE THIRD</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>PROLOGUE</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>THE TWENTY-FIRST NOVEL—MESSER BERTRAMO D'AQUINO IS ENAMOURED OF A LADY WITHOUT OBTAINING A RETURN OF HIS PASSION. BUT FOR THE REASON THAT THE HUSBAND OF THE LADY AFORESAID LAVISHES GREAT PRAISE ON THIS SUITOR OF HERS UNDER THE GUISE OF A FALCON, SHE IS AT LENGTH INDUCED TO TAKE HER LOVER INTO FAVOUR. WHEN THEY FOREGATHER, MESSER BERTRAMO DEMANDS TO KNOW WHY SHE HAS LET HIM COME TO HER. HAVING HEARD THIS, THE CAVALIER BEARS HIMSELF IN GRATEFUL WISE, AND, WITHOUT SO MUCH AS TOUCHING HER, TAKES HIS DEPARTURE AND LEAVES HER IN DERISION</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>THE TWENTY-SECOND NOVEL—A LADY OF TRAPANI BECOMES ENAMOURED OF A MOOR, AND LETS HIM HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HER. SHE ROBS HER HUSBAND, AND THEN TAKES FLIGHT TO BARBARY IN COMPANY WITH THE AFORESAID MOOR AND A TURKISH GIRL. WHEREUPON THE HUSBAND, IN ORDER TO AVENGE HIMSELF, FOLLOWS THEM, HAVING PUT ON A CERTAIN DISGUISE, AND SLAYS THE MOOR AND HIS WIFE. THEN HE RETURNS WITH THE TURKISH GIRL TO TRAPANI, AND, HAVING MADE HER HIS WIFE, HE LIVES WITH HER A LONG TIME IN GREAT HAPPINESS</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>THE TWENTY-THIRD NOVEL—A WIDOW WOMAN BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HER OWN SON, AND BY THE WORKING OF VERY SUBTLE DECEIT CONTRIVES THAT HE SHOULD</u>	

This One



CJC6-E24-H294

HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HER. AFTERWARDS, HAVING
BECOME WITH CHILD, SHE CUNNINGLY DISCLOSES THIS
FACT TO HER SON, WHO, BEING GREATLY INCENSED AT
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, GOES INTO EXILE. THE TRUTH
OF THE DEED IS AT LAST MADE PUBLIC, AND THE MOTHER,
AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD, IS BURNT TO DEATH
BY THE PODESTA 34

THE TWENTY-FOURTH NOVEL—A YOUNG MAN LOVES A CER-
TAIN LADY WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIM IN RETURN. WHERE-
UPON, HAVING CONCEALED HIMSELF IN HER HOUSE, HE
SEES FROM THE PLACE WHERE HE IS HIDDEN A BLACK
MOOR TAKING HIS PLEASURE WITH HER. THE YOUNG
MAN COMES FORWARD, AND WITH MANY INSULTING
WORDS REPROVES THE WICKED NATURE OF THE WOMAN,
AND FINDS HIS FORMER LOVE FOR HER TURNED TO HATRED 47

THE TWENTY-FIFTH NOVEL—A YOUNG GIRL IS BELOVED
BY MANY SUITORS, AND WHILST FEEDING THEM WITH
HOPE, COZENS THEM ONE AND ALL. ONE OF THESE
PURSUES HER MORE CLOSELY THAN THE OTHERS. SHE,
HOWEVER, HAS CRIMINAL CONVERSE WITH A SLAVE OF
THE HOUSE, WHO LETS THIS THING BE KNOWN TO THE
LOVER. WHEREUPON SHE DIES OF GRIEF, AND THE YOUNG
MAN, HAVING PURCHASED THE SLAVE, LETS HIM GO FREE 55

THE TWENTY-SIXTH NOVEL—A LADY BEING ENAMOURD
OF A SEEMLY YOUTH CAUSES HIM TO BE BROUGHT BLIND-
FOLDED INTO HER CHAMBER BY A DISGUISED CONFIDANT
OF HERS. THEN, AFTER HAVING PASSED THE NIGHT
WITH HIM, SHE DIRECTS HIM TO COME THITHER AGAIN,
BUT THE YOUTH HAVING TOLD HIS ADVENTURE TO A
FRIEND OF HIS, THE LADY HEARS OF WHAT HE HAS
DONE, AND LETS HIM COME TO HER NO MORE 63

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH NOVEL—A CERTAIN GENTLE-
WOMAN, HAVING BEEN ABANDONED BY HER LOVER,
DISGUISES HERSELF IN MAN'S GARB, AND GOES TO KILL
HIM, BUT IS TAKEN BY THE CATCHPOLES OF THE COURT.
BEING BROUGHT BEFORE THE PODESTA, SHE PERSUADES
HIM TO LEND HER HIS AID IN WORKING OUT HER VEN-

CONTENTS

v

PAGE.

GEANCE, AND HE, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY BE WITNESS OF HER COURAGE, GOES WITH HER, AND, HAVING REALIZED THE ROBUST SPIRIT THAT WAS IN HER, RESTORES THE PEACE BETWEEN HER AND HER LOVER. THEN, AFTER THE EXCHANGE OF HIGH COURTESIES, HE LEAVES THE TWO WITH THEIR FORMER LOVE RENEWED 71

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH NOVEL—A KNIGHT OF PROVENCE IS OVERGONE WITH LOVE FOR HIS WIFE, WHO BEING ATTACKED BY AN ACCESS OF LUST INDULGES HERSELF WITH A DWARF. A MOORISH SERVING-WOMAN KILLS THEM BOTH IN THE VERY ACT WITH A LANCE, WHEREUPON THE HUSBAND CAUSES THEIR BODIES TO BE CAST OUT AS FOOD FOR WILD BEASTS 78

THE TWENTY-NINTH NOVEL—VIOLA MAKES PROMISE OF HER FAVOURS TO THREE LOVERS IN THE SAME NIGHT. THE FIRST GOES TO HER, BUT HE IS KEPT FROM THE ENJOYMENT OF HIS BOOTY BY THE COMING OF THE SECOND. THEN THE THIRD ARRIVED AND IS TRICKED BY THE SECOND, AND ENTRANCE IS DENIED TO HIM; BUT HE DISCOVERS THE CHEAT, AND SEES WHAT IS BEING DONE. WHEREUPON HE BRINGS CRAFT TO HIS AID, AND TAKES VENGEANCE BOTH UPON THE ONE AND THE OTHER; THEN, BOTH OF THE OTHERS BEING PUT TO HEAVY LOSS AND INJURY, HE REMAINS IN SOLE OWNERSHIP OF THE PREY 85

THE THIRTIETH NOVEL—A YOUNG LADY BEING ENAMoured OF THE PRINCE OF SALERNO SENDS FOR ONE OF HIS CHAPLAINS AND DECLARES TO HIM THAT SHE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE SAID PRINCE NUMEROUS LETTERS PRAYING FOR HER LOVE. THE CHAPLAIN, HAVING DIVINED HER MOTIVE, ENTERS INTO A PLOT WITH HER AND BRINGS THE AFFAIR TO THE ISSUE DESIRED 95

PART THE FOURTH,

PROLOGUE 105

THE THIRTY-FIRST NOVEL—A COUPLE OF GRACIOUS LOVERS TAKE TO FLIGHT IN COMPANY, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY CHANGE THEIR PRESENT CONDITION TO THAT OF

MARRIED FOLK; BUT, HAVING LOST THEIR WAY THROUGH THE COMING ON OF A SUDDEN STORM, THEY LIGHT CASUALLY UPON A LEPER HOSPITAL. THERE, THE YOUNG MAN HAVING BEEN SLAIN BY THE LEPERS, THE GIRL OF HER OWN ACCORD KILLS HERSELF UPON HIS DEAD BODY . . . 107

THE THIRTY-SECOND NOVEL—A WOMAN OF VENICE, AMONGST MANY OTHER ADMIRERS, IS BELOVED BY A FLORENTINE, WHO DESPATCHES TO HER HIS SERVANT WITH A MESSAGE THAT THE ABBESS OF SANTA CHIARA IS FAINT TO SEE HER. BOTH SHE AND HER HUSBAND BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE; WHEREUPON SHE, BY MEANS OF VERY SUBTLE CRAFT, IS LED TO THE FLORENTINE'S HOUSE, IN WHICH THAT VERY SAME NIGHT A FIRE BREAKS OUT. THE CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH GOES TO HELP QUENCH THE SAME, AND, FINDING THERE THE LADY, OF WHOM HE HIMSELF IS ENAMOURED, HE CAUSES HER TO BE CAST INTO PRISON, FROM WHICH THE WAITING WOMAN OF THE FLORENTINE LIBERATES HER BY A PRETTY STRATAGEM, AND REMAINS THERE IN THE LADY'S STEAD. THE NEXT MORNING THE OLD WOMAN IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SIGNORIA IN PLACE OF THE YOUNG ONE, THE CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH IS PUT TO RIDICULE, AND THE LADY RETURNS TO HER HUSBAND WITHOUT ANY HURT WHATEVER . . . 120

THE THIRTY-THIRD NOVEL—MARIOTTO, A YOUNG MAN OF SIENA, WHO IS ENAMOURED OF GIANNOZZA, TAKES FLIGHT TO ALEXANDRIA ON ACCOUNT OF A MURDER WHICH HE HAS COMMITTED. GIANNOZZA FEIGNS TO BE DEAD, AND, HAVING BEEN TAKEN OUT OF HER TOMB, GOES IN SEARCH OF HER LOVER. IN THE MEANTIME MARIOTTO, HAVING HEARD THE NEWS OF HER DEATH, RETURNS TO SIENA, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY DIE LIKEWISE. HE IS RECOGNIZED AND TAKEN, AND HIS HEAD IS STRICKEN OFF. THE LADY FINDING NO TRACE OF HER LOVER IN ALEXANDRIA GOES BACK TO SIENA, WHERE SHE LEARNS THAT HE HAS BEEN BEHEADED, AND THEN DIES OF GRIEF ON HIS CORPSE . . . 131

THE THIRTY-FOURTH NOVEL—TOBIA, A RAGUSAN, TAKES HIS PLEASURE WITH THE WIFE OF AN INNKEEPER OF GIOBENNAZZO, AND BY A MOST SUBTLE TRICK INDUCES THE HUSBAND TO BRING HER TO THE SHIP RIDING ON HIS OWN MARE. THE HUSBAND ON HIS RETURN HOME FINDS HIS WIFE GONE; AND, AFTER HAVING FOR A LONG TIME LAMENTED OVER THE SHORT FAITH OF THE RAGUSAN, MARRIES ANOTHER WOMAN; AND, LETTING GO ALL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS FIRST WIFE, ENJOYS HIS LIFE IN COMPANY OF THE SECOND 143

THE THIRTY-FIFTH NOVEL—EUGENIA, BEING WITH CHILD BY A CERTAIN KNIGHT, FEARS THE WRATH OF HER BROTHERS, AND FEIGNS TO FALL SICK AND DIE OF THE PLAGUE. HER LOVER TAKES HER DISGUISED AS A YOUTH INTO LOMBARDY, WHERE, BEING ATTACKED BY THEIR FOES, THE LOVER IS SLAIN, AND THE LADY KILLS HERSELF ON HIS CORPSE 151

THE THIRTY-SIXTH NOVEL—TWO MEN, NEIGHBOURS AND CLOSE FRIENDS, BY A STRANGE AND COMPLICATED ACCIDENT HAVE CARNAL KNOWLEDGE OF ONE ANOTHER'S WIVES. WHEN THEY BOTH LEARN THE NATURE OF THE THING THEY HAVE DONE, THEY AGREE TO HAVE IN COMMON THEIR WIVES AND ALL THEIR OTHER GOODS, IN ORDER THAT THEIR FRIENDSHIP MAY NOT BE DISTURBED, AND THUS THEY PASS THEIR LIVES PLEASANTLY IN PEACE AND QUIET 158

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH NOVEL—MARCHETTO AND LANZILAO, COMPANION KNIGHTS, BECOME ENAMOURED OF THE SAME LADY. THEY ENGAGE IN A COMBAT AND BOTH MEET THEIR DEATHS THEREFROM; WHEREUPON THE LADY, BY REASON OF THE GRIEF SHE SUFFERS, DIES OF HER OWN WILL. THERE IS UNIVERSAL MOURNING OVER THEIR FATE, AND ALL THREE ARE BURIED IN ONE GRAVE . . . 166

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH NOVEL—ANTONIO MORO IS ENAMOURED OF THE WIFE OF A MARINER, AND BY MEANS OF A TRICK INDUCES THE HUSBAND HIMSELF TO TAKE HIM TO HAVE A MERRY TIME WITH THE WIFE. NEXT, HAVING

BROUGHT HER ON BOARD A BARK, ANTONIO LETS THE HUSBAND HAVE HIS PLEASURE WITH HER, WITHOUT KNOWING WHO SHE MAY BE. THE HUSBAND AFTERWARDS PAYS FOR A FEAST; BUT THE THING HAVING BECOME PUBLICLY KNOWN, HE LEAVES THE PLACE THROUGH SHAME; WHEREUPON ANTONIO AND THE WIFE LEAD A PLEASANT LIFE TOGETHER WITHOUT CONCEALMENT . . . 175

THE THIRTY-NINTH NOVEL—SUSANNA LOVES JOANNI, AND FOR A SHORT TIME THEY ARE HAPPY TOGETHER. JOANNI IS CAPTURED BY MOORS, WHEREUPON THE LADY DISGUISED IN MALE ATTIRE GOES TO TUNIS, AND SELLS HERSELF IN ORDER TO RANSOM HER LOVER. HAVING RESCUED HIM, THEY FLY TOGETHER, BUT BY THE WORKING OF EVIL FORTUNE THEY ARE DRIVEN BACK INTO BARBARY AND ONCE MORE CAPTURED. JOANNI IS HANGED, AND SUSANNA HAVING BEEN RECOGNIZED TO BE A WOMAN SLAYS HERSELF 183

THE FORTIETH NOVEL—GENEFRA, A CATALAN, BECOMES ENAMOURED OF A CERTAIN WOMAN, AND BECAUSE OF THE SLENDER WIT OF HER JEALOUS HUSBAND HE CARRIES OUT HIS PURPOSE. BY A VERY CUNNING TRICK HE INDUCES THE HUSBAND TO BRING HIS WIFE ON BOARD SHIP IN EXCHANGE FOR SOME OTHER PERSON, AND THEN HE TAKES HER AWAY INTO CATALONIA. THE HUSBAND FINDS OUT TOO LATE WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, AND IS LEFT TO MOURN THE ROGUERY OF CATALONIAN TRICKSTERS . . 191

PART THE FIFTH 198

THE FORTY-FIRST NOVEL—TWO CAVALIERS OF FRANCE BECOME ENAMOURED OF TWO FLORENTINE SISTERS, BUT ARE FORCED TO RETURN HOME. ONE OF THE LADIES, WORKING JUDICIOUSLY BY MEANS OF A FALSE DIAMOND, CAUSES THEM BOTH TO RETURN TO FLORENCE; WHEREUPON THEY FIND ENJOYMENT OF THEIR LOVE, ALBEIT IN STRANGE FASHION 200

THE FORTY-SECOND NOVEL—THE QUEEN OF POLAND SENDS AWAY A SON OF HERS IN ORDER THAT HE MAY BE

SLAIN, AND THEN, HAVING BECOME PREGNANT BY ONE OF HER ATTENDANT KNIGHTS, GIVES BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER. BY DIVERS CHANCES THE SON ESCAPES DEATH, AND, BEING ADVISED OF HIS MOTHER'S DOINGS, KILLS HER, AND ON BECOMING KING TAKES TO WIFE THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF HUNGARY 208

THE FORTY-THIRD NOVEL—MISSER MAZZEO PROTOJUDICE FINDS HIS DAUGHTER WITH ANTONIO MARCELLO, WHO TAKES TO FLIGHT UNRECOGNIZED. THE FATHER SENDS AWAY THE DAUGHTER TO BE KILLED, BUT THOSE WHO ARE CHARGED WITH THE ERRAND ARE PITIFUL OF HER, AND LET HER GO FREE; WHEREUPON SHE, HAVING DONNED MALE ATTIRE, GOES TO THE COURT OF THE DUKE OF CALABRIA. SHE IS TAKEN BY HER LORD TO SALERNO, AND THERE FINDS LODGING IN HER LOVER'S HOUSE, AND LEARNS THAT HE HAS SUCCEEDED TO THE GOODS OF HER FATHER. SHE MAKES HERSELF KNOWN TO HIM; WHEREUPON HE TAKES HER TO WIFE, AND THEY LIVE JOYFULLY UPON THE HERITAGE 219

THE FORTY-FOURTH NOVEL—MARINO CARACCIOLLO IS ENAMOURED OF A LADY, WHO LOVES HIM IN RETURN. THEY ARE ABOUT TO COME TO A CONCLUSION, WHEN THE LADY BEHOLDS THE DUKE OF CALABRIA, WHO PROVES MORE TO HER TASTE THAN MARINO; SO, HAVING ABANDONED HER FIRST ENTERPRISE, SHE FOLLOWS UP THE SECOND, AND CONTRIVES TO INDUCE THE DUKE TO TAKE ENJOYMENT WITH HER. HE, ON HIS WAY THITHER, BECOMES CONCERNED AT THE GRIEF OF HIS FRIEND, AND, OUT OF HIS GOODNESS, RENOUNCES THE PLEASURE, THUS LEAVING MARINO THE POSSESSOR OF THE BOOTY . . 228

THE FORTY-FIFTH NOVEL—A CASTILIAN SCHOLAR, WHILE JOURNEYING TO BOLOGNA, FALLS IN LOVE AT AVIGNON, AND IN ORDER TO HAVE HIS WILL OF THE LADY COVENANTS TO GIVE HER A THOUSAND DUCATS. REPENTING OF HIS DEED, HE GOES HIS WAY, AND BY CHANCE MEETS THE LADY'S HUSBAND, TO WHOM, UNWITTING WHO HE WAS, HE RECOUNTS HIS ADVENTURE. THE HUSBAND DISCOV-

ERS THAT IT IS HIS WIFE WHO IS THUS CONCERNED, AND INDUCES THE SCHOLAR TO RETURN WITH HIM TO AVIGNON. THERE HE RESTORES THE MONEY, KILLS HIS WIFE, AND BESTOWS UPON THE SCHOLAR MANY GIFTS AND MUCH HONOURABLE USAGE 237

THE FORTY-SIXTH NOVEL—THE KING OF PORTUGAL CAPTURES IN BATTLE AN ARAB CHIEF, WHOSE MOTHER, WITHOUT TAKING FURTHER SECURITY, REPAIRS TO THE KING'S CAMP WITH THIRTY THOUSAND DOUBLOONS AS RANSOM. THE KING IS WILLING TO SURRENDER HIM, BUT REQUIRES CONDITIONS TO WHICH THE ARAB WILL NOT CONSENT; WHEREUPON THE KING GIVES HIM HIS LIBERTY AND HIS MONEY ALSO. AT A FUTURE TIME THE ARAB, OUT OF GRATITUDE, BRINGS A GREAT ARMY AT HIS OWN CHARGES TO AID THE KING IN WAR 246

THE FORTY-SEVENTH NOVEL—HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SICILY FINDS LODGING IN THE HOUSE OF A CERTAIN CASTILIAN CAVALIER, AND TWO OF HIS GENTLEMEN-IN-WAITING VIOLENTLY DEFLOWER THE TWO DAUGHTERS OF THEIR HOST. THE KING, HAVING HEARD OF THIS DEED WITH MUCH REGRET, MAKES THE TWO GENTLEMEN MARRY THE YOUNG GIRLS. THEN, THE HONOUR OF THE DAMSELS BEING RESTORED, HE CAUSES THE HEADS OF THE BRIDEGROOMS TO BE STRICKEN OFF FORTHWITH . . 253

THE FORTY-EIGHTH NOVEL—A SON OF THE KING OF TUNIS IS TAKEN BY CORSAIRS AND SOLD AT PISA. HIS MASTER GETS TO LOVE HIM, AND IN THE COURSE OF TIME SETS HIM FREE, UNWITTING WHO HE IS, AND SENDS HIM HOME, AND THE YOUNG MAN BECOMES SHORTLY AFTER KING OF TUNIS. SOME YEARS LATER THE PISAN IS TAKEN BY SOME MOORISH GALLEYS, AND IT CHANCES THAT HE IS, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, MADE A SLAVE OF THE KING, WHO, HAVING RECOGNIZED HIM, CAUSES HIS SISTER TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN, AND OUT OF GRATITUDE GIVES HER, TOGETHER WITH A GREAT TREASURE, IN MARRIAGE TO HIS FRIEND, AND SENDS HIM BACK TO PISA A RICH MAN 260

CONTENTS

xi

PAGE.

THE FORTY-NINTH NOVEL—FREDERICK BARBAROSSA, HAVING DISGUISED HIMSELF, GOES TO VISIT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. THE POPE HEARING THIS CAUSES TO BE LIMNED A PORTRAIT OF FREDERICK, WHICH HE SENDS TO THE SULTAN, WHEREFORE FREDERICK IS CAPTURED, AND THE SULTAN BEFORE LIBERATING HIM DEMANDS AS RANSOM FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DUCATS. BARBAROSSA LEAVES IN PLEDGE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND HAVING RETURNED HOME SENDS THE PROMISED MONEY. THE SULTAN IS SO GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THIS INTEGRITY THAT HE RETURNS THE RANSOM, AND FRIENDSHIP HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE TWO SOVEREIGNS, THE EMPEROR AFTERWARDS CHASES THE POPE OUT OF ROME 269

THE FIFTIETH NOVEL—A CASTILIAN CAVALIER, A FAVOURITE OF THE COUNT D'ARMAGNAC, SERVES THE KING OF FRANCE, AND IS MADE FIELD-MARSHAL. THE DAUGHTER OF THE COUNT BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HIM, AND MAKES HIM THE OFFER OF HER PERSON, WHICH OFFER THE CAVALIER, OUT OF HIS GREAT VIRTUE, REFUSES. WHEREUPON THE COUNT IN GRATITUDE GIVES HIM HIS DAUGHTER TO WIFE, AND THE KING MAKES HIM A GREAT LORD 279

EPILOGUE 289

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOLUME TWO.

	TO FACE PAGE
A JEALOUS FREAK	<i>Frontispiece</i>
BERTRAMO'S RENUNCIATION	18
THE VENGEANCE OF NICOLAS	74
SUSANNA A CAPTIVE	188
MANE VENIT CONSILIUM	206

The Novellino.

Part the Third.

PART THE THIRD

Prologue

THE SECOND PART OF THE NOVELLINO; WHICH IS MADE UP OF DIVERTING DISCOURSES, HAVING NOW COME TO AN END, THE THIRD PART HERE MAKES AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING. IN THIS THE FEMALE SEX, SO FULL OF FAILINGS, WILL BE HANDLED SOMEWHAT CRUELLY. BUT FIRST OF ALL WILL BE GIVEN THE GENERAL EXORDIUM; AND THE PROFFERED GIFT OF THE AUTHOR, AND THEN WILL FOLLOW THE NOVELS SET FORTH IN THEIR DUE ORDER.

MASUCCIO

NOW that an end has come to my seafaring adventure, which I made in the company of my pleasant and merry tales; now that my sea-boat has been drawn ashore, and its sails furled, its oars and rudder set in order; now that farewell greetings and words of gratitude, such as it is allowed to me to express, have been spoken to Æolus and Neptune—it seems that it only remains for me to carry out in some measure the work I have, after such long deliberation, resolved to do. Wherefore, having bidden farewell for good and all to these delightful shores, it will behove me to take my way through rough and gloomy paths, and to make beginning of this Third Part of my Novellino, and to go on to the end thereof, concluding perchance with speech less sharp and bitter than that which I shall employ in the beginning.

And while I was led by somewhat keen desire to direct my hurrying steps into these paths, the beaten track itself tempted me to enter into a dark and horrid wood, hedged round by knotty trunks and prickly thorns, which grew there unrestrained in their natural wise. How terrifying and cruel the ingress to this place appeared to me, standing there all alone and unarmed, each one who

reads this may determine for himself. And certes, being now wellnigh overdone with fear, the ardent desire which possessed me began to grow cold, and many and many a time I came near to turn backward my footsteps. While I stood thus confused and uncertain, there appeared before me an old man, having his face garnished with a spreading beard of white hair, whom I judged, as soon as I saw him, to be of august presence, and wielding sway which I must respect. Neither his form nor the raiment he wore appeared to be aught akin to the world of human beings, but were rather those of some celestial deity, whereupon I called to mind how I had once upon a time beheld his natural form portrayed in marble sculpture, and I forthwith knew him to be Mercury, the most eloquent of the gods;* and, for the reason that my dread of him had only been made all the greater by his manifestation to me, I felt myself now too much awestricken to approach him, or even to raise my eyes to look him in the face.

Then he, observing how greatly I was afeared, himself reassured me, glancing at me in pleasant wise and calling me by my name in a gentle voice, and inspiring my heart with no little boldness thereby. Next he said to me, "My Masuccio, as you yourself can give good witness, I have known you from your tenderest years to be one much more liberally endowed by nature with inborn wit than furnished with learning by your teachers. Therefore, when I marked you standing thus laden with anxious

* This presentation of Mercury as an old man is remarkable, and it would be interesting to know where the author could have seen the marble sculpture to which he refers. The Etruscan and Pelasgic statues of Hermes were occasionally bearded; *sphenopogon Hermes* (Artemidorus, ii. 42), and Herodotus, ii. 51, obviously refers to the archaic Hermes: *Tauta men nun, kai alla pros toutoisi ta ego phraso, Ellenēs ap' Aiguption nenomikasi, tou de 'Ermeo ta agalmata ortha echein ta aidia poieuntes, ouk ap' Aiguption memathekasi all' apo Helasgon, protoi men Ellenon apanton 'Athenaioi paralabontes para de touton olloi.* Of the later bearded effigies of the god there is one on a triangular altar in the villa Borghese in Rome, one in Wilton House—in this he bears a ram on his shoulders—and another, which, according to Winckelmann, was formerly in the gardens of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, and is now in the Museum at Naples.

thoughts and confused in mind at the entering place to this gloomy and devious wood, I was fain to have compassion upon you, and to give you my help, knowing that in the part of your book which is to follow you are minded in your biting mood to rebuke and to punish the wicked hearts and the unbounded turpitude of the infamous female sex. Thus I will point out to you a method—what though this same may appear to you to be a path very hard to tread—whereby you may with ease find a way into this distressful labyrinth, and issue therefrom once more as a victor. Wherefore enter this wild wood straightway, and, before you shall have gone far therein, you will espy on your left hand a well-tracked road, upon which, if you shall examine it narrowly, you will recognize the footsteps left thereon by Juvenal, that satirist of old time, and by Boccaccio, our own poet so famous and so highly praised, whose florid idiom and style you have ever done your best to imitate. Take care, therefore, that you follow in the footsteps of these men, for you will assuredly find that you must perforce travel over a very wide and ample plain, and in your journeyings in every part of the same you will, on all sides, come face to face with all manner of new and wonderful things, which will, without ceasing, fill you with fresh wonder and amazement every minute that passes, so that your pen, however weary it may be, will not be suffered to rest for a moment unemployed. For, be it well known, there would not be found in the choicest eloquence power enough to set forth with due effect what there is to be said concerning this corrupt, this cruel, this miscreant sex of women, from whose treachery and wicked dealings the strivings of the immortal gods—and much less those of human creatures—can do naught to rescue us. Moreover, I will keep silence concerning the measureless deceits practised by this perverse brood against our mighty father Jove himself, against the radiant Apollo, against us and the residue of the gods; to all of whom, in sooth, every mystery is clear, and to whom the future is even as the present day.

But now, putting on one side the heavenly deities, so as not to cause you to wander aside from your destined

path, I will yet further hearten you to your task by narrating to you yet other things concerning the unfaithful and variable female sex, because every step you take you will find their ways to be full of all sorts of sin and lasciviousness. For this reason see that you be well on your guard, for in the midmost point of the wood, where the trees are most shady and thickest, you will behold, long before you shall come thereto, and placed some distance from the road, a most delightful garden fenced in with marble walls, in which are gates of alabaster adorned with sculpture which are a wonder to behold: How full it may be of green growing laurels, of fresh olive-trees, and of other varied and choice shrubs producing luscious fruits and laden with sweet-smelling flowers, it boots me not to tell you now, seeing that in a short space of time you will behold all these things with your own eyes.

This spot you must know has been called the sacristy of chastity, and has likewise been consecrated and chosen by all the celestial deities as the special possession of our lady Ipolita Maria dei Visconti, writing of whom you have already covered so many sheets of paper, and whose name you are for ever celebrating and exalting in such worthy fashion with the highest praise and honour. In this place also it is meet to sing the praises, together with hers, of the Infantas Donna Lionora and Donna Beatrice of Aragon,* her sisters-in-law, ladies who are at the same time honest, modest, and winsome, and honoured by the ensign of the snow-white ermine† in their laps. These ladies, by the virtues which are their own, have already outdone nature, and have decked their royal brows with jewels of the East, and, wrapped round in their purple-gold embroidered mantles, have withdrawn themselves altogether from intercourse with the crowd of womankind. On the highest spot within the garden you will espy a banner, on the green field of which there is pictured the semblance of a little animal of the purest white, standing as if in doubt, with its foot uplifted so as

* Daughters of Ferdinand I.

† This is an allusion to the order of Ermellino, instituted by Ferdinand I.

not to befoul the same in the mud! From its mouth there issues a scroll, upon which is written in letters of gilt the motto, "*Malo mori quam fœdari.*"* Over and beyond this you will perceive that the boundary hedges of the garden are adorned with hangings of blue cloth of the richest texture, thickly sown with the representations of vases filled with golden rods, the vases standing in the midst of burning flames, which thus refine the purity and consummate nature of the gold, making up the notable ensign which, as you well know, this illustrious lady, a very divinity to us, has chosen as a device most fitting for her use.

Likewise you will remark how the whole of this sacred spot that is surrounded by unicorns of the fiercest nature; which have become obedient and gentle simply through perceiving the odour which hangs about the modest dames and damsels who have their dwelling within the garden aforesaid.† Therefore I bid you take good care, if you would not run in danger of smarting under our anger and indignation, that you do not, either in your thoughts or by

* The motto of the order of the Ermellino.

† One of the mediæval legends of the unicorn was that it could only be caught by the bait of a virgin, and that in her presence it would lose its fierceness and lie down at her feet. In the "*Piacevoli Notti*," Straparola makes the unicorn the subject of the enigma to the First Fable of the Thirteenth Book, and endows the animal with similar qualities. The Chinese tradition is very much the same, describing the beast to be of a gentle nature, and unwilling even to tread upon an insect. On the other hand, Pliny writes, viii., 21: "But the most fell and furious beast of all other is the *Licorne* or *Monoceros*: his body resembles a horse, his head a stag, his feet an elephant, his tail a bore: he loweth after a hideous manner, one black horn he hath in the mids of his forehead, bearing out two cubits in length: by report this wild beast cannot possibly be caught alive." Ælian, "*De Nat. Animal.*," xvi. 20, places its habitat in the mountain districts of India. "Amongst others they enumerate the unicorn, which they call *cartazonon*, and say that it reaches the size of a horse of mature age, possesses a mane and reddish hair, and that it excels in swiftness. One black horn projects between the eyebrows, not awkwardly, but with a certain natural twist, and terminating in a sharp point. It is said to be gentle to other beasts approaching it, but to fight with its fellows." Ludovicus Vertomanus, in "*The Historie of Travayle in the East and West Indies*," declares that

your words, or by what you set down with your pen; bring into notice or entangle in either great or small degree any one of these most virtuous ladies aforesaid in the course of this journey which you have undertaken. Nay, if it should happen that hereafter you should be minded to treat of their sacred perfection, it will behove you always to write them down, and to include them in the number of our divinities. Also let it not escape your mind, if at any time you should have a desire to write aught concerning them, that you may tell with truth well approved, how these ladies alone have remained true women, and have kept the purity of their sex as it was given to them by nature. Wherefore for the present time let it be sufficient to you to gaze upon and wonder at this marvellous place, both from afar and nigh thereto, and to follow diligently the path which we have pointed out to you, forasmuch as you will always have us with you for your government and your guidance."

As soon as he had brought this discourse of his to an end, he straightway disappeared from before me, and, in like manner as long seasons of wretchedness are dispersed and put to flight by the unexpected and sudden advent of good fortune, even so my terror and the fear which had hitherto possessed me were transformed into exceeding great gladness by listening to the finely-spoken and pleasing discourse of the god. Thus, having taken courage from the consolations he had just given me and from his commands, and likewise from the promises which

he saw two unicorns in a temple at Mecca, which had been given to the Sultan by a King of Ethiopia. In the "Bestiary" of Philip de Thaun is the following rhyme:

"Monosceros est Beste, un corne ad en la teste,
 Purceo ad si a nun, de buc ad facun;
 Par Pucele est prise; or vez en quel guise
 Quant hom le volt cacer et prendre et enginner
 Si vent hom ul forest u sis riparis est;
 La met une Pucele hors de sein sa mamele,
 Et par odurement Monosceros la sent:
 Dunc vent à la Pucele, et si baiset la mamele,
 En sein devant se dort, issi vent à sa mort;
 Li hom suivent atant ki l'ocit en dormant
 U tres tout vif le prent, si fais puis sun talent."

T. WRIGHT, *Popular Treatises on Science*, p. 81.

he had made me with regard to the future, I took my way into the forest without further hesitation, and, passing along with hasty steps, I soon found myself within the bounds of the green and lovely little meadow in which the garden described by the god had been planned and made. But the commands which he had laid upon me did not permit me to fare any further. Nevertheless, being heartened by the sound of sweetest harmony coming from divers instruments which discoursed tuneful melodies withinside the garden, I felt content with the mere sight of the same, and having seated myself at the foot of a forest tree, I set to work, rejoicing greatly the while, to write the novel which follows.

•

Novel the Twenty-first

ARGUMENT

MESSER BERTRAMO D'AQUINO IS ENAMOURED OF A LADY WITHOUT GETTING A RETURN OF HIS PASSION. BUT FOR THE REASON THAT THE HUSBAND OF THE LADY AFORESAID LAVISHES GREAT PRAISE ON THIS SUITOR OF HERS UNDER THE GUISE OF A FALCON, SHE IS AT LENGTH INDUCED TO TAKE HER LOVER INTO FAVOUR. WHEN THEY FOREGATHER, MESSER BERTRAMO DEMANDS TO KNOW WHY SHE HAS LET HIM COME TO HER. HAVING HEARD THIS, THE CAVALIER BEARS HIMSELF IN GRATEFUL WISE, AND, WITHOUT SO MUCH AS TOUCHING HER, TAKES HIS DEPARTURE AND LEAVES HER IN DERISION.

TO THE MOST EXCELLENT LADY, ANTONELLA
D'AQUINO, COUNTESS, AND WIFE OF
THE KING'S CHAMBERLAIN*

EXORDIUM

MOST excellent Countess, being now in the humour to carry out the set purpose which I have formed, and to castigate in ten other novels of mine the evil nature, the wicked vices, and the crafty machinations of ill-minded women, it seems to me that it will be both fitting and necessary to treat of certain trifling matters in the story which follows, in such measure that you, a follower of the school and standard of virtue, you who by your own peculiar worth have overcome and conquered the natural inclination of the female sex, may deliver to us a full and true judgment, telling us in what degree the natural qualities and the habits of women differ from those of men, in quantity and in kind also, taking to yourself the while all the fame that is rightly yours. In this

* Wife of the Count d'Avalos, to whom Masuccio dedicates Novel XII. She was the only daughter of the Marquis Pescara.

fashion the extraordinary virtue and the lofty deeds practised by a most worthy cavalier, sprung from your own noble stock,* concerning which you will read near the end of the story, will afford you manifest proof of the truth of my saying.

THE NARRATIVE

IT is now not many days ago since a tale was told to me as truth undoubted by a certain cavalier of good repute, how, in those days when Manfred † was overthrown and slain by Charles, first of the name, who subsequently conquered and took possession of the whole kingdom, there was one who bore a part in the conquest aforesaid, a certain valorous and active cavalier called by the name of Messer Bertramo d'Aquino. Being a mighty shrewd fighter, he was appointed captain; over and beyond this, he was sage in counsel, far-seeing, and gallant beyond any other gentleman at that time holding service in the army of the King Charles aforesaid, and accordingly he was wont to let all his friends view with delight and his enemies taste with little pleasure, the high and daring deeds he wrought.

Therefore, after he had gained full possession of the kingdom, the king, accompanied by the whole body of

* The family of Pescara sprang from Aquino, as did also Messer Bertramo.

† Natural son of Frederic II. On the death of Conrad his brother, he governed the kingdom for Conradin his nephew. The Pope claimed the kingdom of Naples for the Holy See, and ultimately gave it in fee to Charles of Anjou. Manfred was defeated and slain by Charles at Beneventum in 1266. The battle was lost by the treachery of the Apulians in Manfred's service:

"E l'altra, il cui ossame ancor s'accoglie
A Ceperan, là dove fu bugiardo
Ciascum Pugliese."—DANTE, *Inferno*, xxviii.

After his death the church endeavoured to withhold from the body of the excommunicated Manfred the rites of burial, for although Charles had caused it to be interred, the Bishop of Cosenza afterwards rifled the grave.

his barons and courtiers, went to Naples to enjoy all the delightful and delicate fruits which the advent of peace always holds out to the conquerors. They began to devote themselves to joustings and balls and divers other feasts given in honour of their triumph, and amongst the crowd of cavaliers who took special delight in diversions of this sort—peradventure as a reward for all the dangers and fatigues undergone while serving with the army in the wars—Messer Bertramo was to be found. Now it happened that he, having one day cast eyes upon Madonna Fiola Torella at a certain ball, straightway fell in love with her so ardently that he found he could in no wise let his thoughts turn towards any other object; and, in spite of the fact that Messer Corrado, the husband of the lady, was a particular friend of his own, and one who in the prosecution of the late war had borne his part manfully, fighting side by side with Messer Bertramo, he, completely taken and bound by the charms of the lady, so that no restraint could avail anything against the strength of his passion, set himself with all his mind to bring to an issue the enterprise in which he had embarked. Thus he began to joust in her honour, and to prepare many sumptuous feasts on her behalf, spending and giving away his substance—thus letting it be made manifest to her every hour that passed how he loved her more dearly than he loved his own self.

Now it fell out, either because the lady was exceedingly true of heart, or on account of the superabundant love which she bore to her husband, that she did naught else but mock at the cavalier and the amorous courting he lavished upon her. Thus, all his labour and pains being of no effect, she showed herself every day more cruel and inflexible to his prayers; and, howbeit he perceived that with regard to this enterprise of his all hope was fled, nevertheless, as is the common use of all those who are consumed by fervent love, his desire, increasing from hour to hour, ever waxed into a fiercer flame. And while the luckless lover was in this untoward mind, without even enjoying the boon of a single glance graciously vouchsafed to him by the lady, it chanced one day, when Messer Corrado and his wife, accompanied by divers other ladies

and gentlemen, were going out to enjoy a bout of hawking, they came unexpectedly upon a covey of partridges, and behind them a wild falcon, which was scattering them in such fashion that they could not in any way come together again.

When the company beheld this they were all mightily diverted thereat, and Messer Corrado, amongst the others, declared with a merry face that it seemed to him as if he had just beheld, under the likeness of the falcon, Messer Bertramo, his valiant captain, chasing and putting to flight the foemen in some battle of the late war, bearing himself in such wise, that, as soon as he might show himself with lance and with sword, not a single one of his adversaries would find stomach to await his onslaught. And over and beyond this, he went on to say that, in the valiant deeds of arms which he wrought without ceasing, Messer Bertramo reminded him, not only of the falcon which they had just seen chasing the flying partridges, but also of a bold and savage lion amongst a herd of cowardly cattle.

Having said so much, he spake yet more in the same strain, unwitting that the cavalier whom he lauded in these terms of praise was in a certain sense fascinated by the charms of his own wife. He related so many other examples of Messer Bertramo's worth and pleasant humour and splendid liberality, that there was not a single one of the company who did not on account of this praise become more favourably disposed towards Bertramo even than was the speaker. Amongst these, too, was Madonna Fiola, who up to this time had suffered neither the thought of the cavalier himself nor of his worth to find a lodgment in her heart. But she, when she heard and considered how great were the commendations given to this gentleman by her husband, to whose words she was ever wont to give unquestioning faith, was moved straightway to change the cruelty and dislike for him which had heretofore possessed her into an excessive passion of love. Wherefore, having returned a prisoner of love to her house from which she had gone forth free as air, she began to desire most earnestly that her lover might pass that way, in order that, letting herself be seen by him in

her most gracious aspect, she might let him know how completely she was changed both in her condition and temper.

As it was willed by the happy fortune of the two lovers, the lady, being still in the humour aforesaid, soon caught sight of the cavalier passing by, more elegant and comely of aspect, as it seemed to her, than was his wont; and he, without letting rise in his heart hopes of gaining any answer, made her an amorous salutation, according to his habit. The lady, as soon as she saw this, gave him back, as she had already in her mind determined, the reply his greeting demanded, feeling the greatest joy meanwhile. On this account the cavalier, delighted beyond measure, and overcome by amazement as well, went his way to his own house. There he set himself to canvass the affair fully, and to cudgel his brains as to how he should proceed in the matter, and not being able to call to mind that he had brought into practice any fresh or unwonted expedient whereby he could have induced her to show him such great kindness, and knowing not how to come to any rightful judgment in the matter, he found himself, as it were, altogether puzzled. Whereupon he sent for one of his most intimate friends, one who was well informed as to his private affairs, and to this man he narrated, point by point, the strange accident which had befallen him, and all his own astonishing reflections thereanent. This friend, who was gifted with great sense and prudence, and one, moreover, quite free from all amorous passion, began forthwith to make a jest of the lover and of his dreaming, and answered him in these words: "In sooth, I marvel not at all at your lack of judgment, seeing that love has dazzled your understanding in such wise as to keep you in ignorance as to the stuff women are made of, and of the customs they practise, and of the humours which their faulty nature produces in them. Be well assured that in no one of them, however honest and circumspect she may be, will there be found aught of constancy or stability. Of a surety the greater part of them may be set down as incontinent, faithless, wayward, vindictive, and full of suspicion, knowing little of love, and void of charity of any sort whatever. Envy, as the one passion peculiarly their own, occupies the highest

place in the centre of their hearts. In them there is no reason, and they are never moved to act by sober and well-considered purpose. In any disputes which they may provoke they never keep a well-balanced mind, but with their unbridled desires they are ever wont to choose the baser part, according to the fashion in which they may be swayed by their light unstable wit. And as a proof that these words of mine are true, let us call to mind how often in these our times we may have seen some particular woman, loved and courted by many different gentlemen of worth, and lovers gifted with every virtue, who at the same time will, taking the libidinous she-wolf for her model, turn her back upon them all, and give herself to the embraces of some base villain filled full of every wickedness. Therefore, can you bring yourself to believe that this one, after having so long treated you with churlishness, on account of which you in sooth have been brought more than once nigh unto death, can have kept in this humour with any other set purpose and design except to win for herself the glory of having gulled for so long a time such a proper gentleman and lover as you yourself are, and, with a pretence of modesty, to rejoice at seeing you in travail and languishment the while, deeming by such conduct she may magnify the fame of her beauty and charm? Likewise, in the same way you may be well assured that it is not on account of any set purpose, or for the reason that you yourself have given any fresh cause therefor, that she has shown herself thus graciously disposed towards you, but simply because she is thus following the course acceptable to her own base and wicked nature, without digressing at all therefrom. Wherefore I do not doubt but that you, if you shall follow up this track rather than put faith in the planet which is now ruling, may achieve a threefold victory in this long-prosecuted undertaking of yours. Moreover, without making farther delay thereanent, write to her in seemly fashion, and try your best to have granted to you some occasion of speaking to her; thus striking the iron while it is hot, whereby of a surety you will let your design have issue in the way you so greatly desire."

Thus, with much discourse of this same character, this friend made Messer Bertramo understand full well what the quality was and the natural disposition of women at large, exhorting him at the same time to take care never to give way to overmuch joy on account of any kindness received from one of the sex, nor to be cast down with sorrow should the opposite thing befall him; forasmuch as, neither in the one case nor in the other, ought there to be found any occasion for making much ado thereanent, seeing that the affair itself was a trifling one and of no great importance. Rather he counselled Messer Bertramo to pluck the fruit which might be offered as the day and the season might allow, giving no thought to the past and nursing no hope as to the future, prosecuting this enterprise in such fashion that this woman, and every other one of her sex, might find herself flouted and befooled, and able to glean little or nothing of gratification from the malice and wickedness of their inborn selves.

The cavalier, feeling himself confirmed and encouraged by the discourse of this true friend of his, straightway took pen and paper, and in the huge delight of his new hope wrote to the lady of his love in mighty passionate words. After he had set before her the whole story of his most fervent love, called into being by her excessive beauty, he renewed the offer of himself as her servant, and, together with many other well-trimmed and loving words, he made an end by begging her that she would graciously deign to assign him a time and a place for a satisfactory interview, in order that he, simply by once having speech with her, might find recompense for all those numerous and protracted vexations which he had suffered. After this letter had been despatched in very cautious wise, and had been received and read with exceeding satisfaction on her part, she, noting well every portion thereof, let him have free access to her heart, now infected with the malady of love, in such full, free measure that, not only was she ready and willing to accord to him an audience with her such as he prayed for, but without any restraint whatsoever laid herself out entirely to grant him her favour.

Whereupon she straightway returned to him an an-

swer in fitting wise, bidding him on the very next evening to betake himself on foot into the garden of her house and there to wait near a certain tree which she duly specified. Then, as soon as her husband should be asleep and the residue of the household settled to rest, she would go to him, even more than willingly. The cavalier, overjoyed as everyone may well imagine by this answer, and perceiving how the counsels of his friend were bearing due fruit, went as soon as the night began to fall, accompanied by certain servants of his, at the appointed hour to the spot which had been fixed, and there awaited the coming of the lady. She, on her part, when she perceived that the cavalier had come already to the place of meeting, opened in secret wise the door which led to the garden without delay, and came with mincing delicate steps to the spot where he stood. He, advancing towards her with open arms, received her very graciously, saying, the while, "Happily indeed are you come, sweet soul of mine, on whose account I have heretofore undergone so many and so great vexations."

After these lovers had given and taken back a thousand sweetest kisses, they sat down to rest beneath a sweet-smelling orange-tree, waiting for a sign to be given them by a trusty serving-woman, who should at last lead them away into a chamber on the ground floor in which a couch, prepared in dainty fashion and finely perfumed, had been got in order for them. Having gone therein, the cavalier, holding the lady by the hand, and using pleasant speech, and kissing her tenderly while he begged her to grant him the last and the long-desired end of love, was suddenly seized by the wish to inquire the reason why she had for so long time exhibited herself to him as one possessed by such inflexible severity, and again, why she had so suddenly, contrary to every hope of his, shown herself so gracious and benign, and granted him success in the undertaking he prized so highly, which thing seemed to him beyond belief.

The lady, without letting interpose any delay, thus made answer: "Dearest and sweetest lord of my life, I will reply and give satisfaction to this most pleasant question of yours in the briefest words. It is true perhaps

that, during all the time in which I showed myself harsh and hostile you-ward, I was using far more severity than was needful, looking at your worth and your noble estate. Certes, this inflexibility of mine has had no other cause—over and beyond the preservation of my honour—than the most fervent love which I have ever borne and still bear towards my husband, to whom in no event, however great and pressing it might be, would I ever have proved myself in thought, much less in deed, guilty of aught which might afterwards return upon him to his dishonour. Moreover, this same love which I have towards him has, by its very nature and by a certain inherent force, led me to give myself to your loving embraces, and I will tell you how this was brought about. The other day, as I was going to the chase in the company of my husband and of certain other ladies of my acquaintance, we saw before us a falcon in pursuit of some partridges, which, as is the habit and nature of such birds, he quickly dispersed on all sides. Whereupon my husband said straightway that it seemed to him as if he saw before his eyes Messer Bertramo in the midst of the battle, putting his foes to rout. And over and beyond this he went on to discourse concerning you, telling us of so many other amazing virtues of yours, and sounding the praises of your deeds of daring in such wise that, not only did I feel myself constrained to yield you my love by the claims of reason, but likewise all those who were present prayed to God for your welfare, and we all felt desire to please you in whatever way we might. And furthermore my husband declared that, on account of your exceeding worth, he felt himself bound to love all those who loved you, and hold all those who were of a contrary mind as his chiefest enemies. Therefore I, who am regardful of his wishes in everything, perceiving at once how his highest desire was that everyone should hold you in love and affection, understood that no greater happiness could befall him than that all those about him should love you as well and cordially. Thus, before I moved from that place, I was made aware how all the chains and defences which I had wrought around my obdurate heart, in order to shut out of it all love for you, were broken and dashed to pieces; and, excited by a new

Bertrando's Representations

FROM A PASTORAL BY F. B. MILLER

Berthelme's Kenning (1981)

FROM A PAINTING BY P. W. REIDERS



and burning flame of love, I was altogether melted with longing to be at your disposition, as in sooth I now am, and intend to be, as long as it may be granted to me to live."

Now Messer Bertramo, who from his most tender years had ever been in the habit of dealing with everybody and everything with the grandest and most magnificent generosity, as soon as he heard how that the husband of the lady herself had let him acquire her favours by reason of the excessive praises he had spoken and the love he had shown, felt stirring within himself straightway the spirit of a true-hearted and righteous cavalier; and, turning the matter over in his own mind, he said to himself: "Alas, alas! good Bertramo, wilt thou show thyself to be a caitiff knight for so base and so trifling a thing as the enjoyment of a woman's person, what though for many years past thou mayst have desired the possession of the same? And, admitting that this may be the greatest and the dearest boon that anyone could give to thee, shall not thy well tried virtue reap all the higher praise on this account? The doing of noble actions consists not in putting oneself to the proof with regard to things of little worth, but in the undertaking of deeds of high emprise when the doing thereof may not be to our liking. In all thy lifetime thou hast never met any man who has outdone thyself in the practise of courtesy and gentle usage; wherefore, by what act couldst thou make manifest the spotlessness of thy virtue better than by this one, especially as, having the lady in thy power, and deeming thou mightest take thy pleasure with her for a long time to come, thou hast gained the victory over thyself, and hast foregone the fruition of the thing thou hast desired for so long? And to speak yet farther, if the husband of this lady had been thy most bitter enemy, one who had without ceasing sought to cast down thy good name and thy renown, what vengeance more fell and more hateful couldst thou wreak upon him than to let eternal shame fall upon his head? Wherefore, what law of reason or of honesty is there which wills that our friends should be dealt with as if they were foes? And to assure thee that this man is to thee a most perfect friend, beyond any example which has ever befallen

in the past, thou hast heard and understood plainly from the mouth of this lady herself how that she was led hither to grant thee the boon of her love by no other power than that of the love which her husband bears to thee. Thus, if thou shalt take this thing which is proffered thee, what a noble recompense it will be to render him for having been thy well-wisher and for loading thee with the highest praise in thy absence, as one is called to do in the case of one's closest friends! Now, may it never please God that such vileness may ever fall upon any gentleman of Aquino."

And thus, without farther calling to mind the love which possessed him or the great beauty of the lady, he said, turning towards her as he spake, "Dear lady, may God forbid that the love which your worthy husband bears towards me, and the superabundant praise which he has given me, and the many other kindly words and actions said and done by him on my behalf, should obtain so foul and base a recompense as to make me, by any act of mine whatsoever, do aught against what he holds most dear—deeds which might, either in great or in small measure, come back to him for his dishonour. Nay, always from this time forth I will place at his disposal both my body and my estate, as I should be bound to do for my own brother or my most loyal friend; and thee, lady, I shall ever hold as my sister, making offer of myself for what I am and whatsoever I may be worth, with all my possessions, as well as the service of my person, to be employed in the preservation of thy honour and good fame."

Then, having unloosed from a handkerchief certain rich jewels which he had brought with him as a love-gift for her, he cast the same into her lap, saying, "Wear these gems for the sake of my love, and in memory of the deed I am doing at this moment. Let it be your constant thought, moreover, to be more faithful to your husband than you have ever been heretofore." After he had kissed her tenderly on the brow, and had given her many thanks for the generous manner in which she had received him, he took his leave of her.

In how great measure the lady was overcome with

confusion and anger at her rejection by the cavalier, everyone will be able to understand for himself. Nevertheless, moved by the innate greed that swayed her, she gathered up the very precious gems, and went back into the house. When a certain time had elapsed, the whole story got noised abroad; whereupon it was proclaimed in Messer Bertramo's praise how he was supreme in arms, in courage, in discretion, and in foresight; likewise, how in noble deeds, in generosity, and in the loftiest virtue, he outstripped every other cavalier who had ever lived in that age, either within or without the bounds of Italy.

MASUCCIO

HOWEVER excessive the terms we may use in according our praise to Messer Bertramo for that noble behaviour of his towards his friend which has been described in the foregoing novel, his merits will still seem to demand yet more lavish commendation. Wherefore I leave this question to be solved by those who have been, and still are, possessed by fervent passion of love, so that each one, thinking of his own case, may decide what share of praise may be due—a matter which I refrain from touching through the lack of power I feel to deal therewith. Nevertheless, calling back to my mind the noteworthy counsel of that friend of his, and in what fashion he made clear the quality, the nature, and the carriage of women in that true and most praiseworthy discourse which he delivered, I myself will exhibit in this very next novel, in order that I may appear as one willing to confirm his judgment, how a wicked and abandoned woman set to work to satisfy her unbridled lust—a matter which will strike with no small astonishment the understanding of all who may read or hear tell of the same.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-FIRST NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-second

ARGUMENT

A LADY OF TRAPANI BECOMES ENAMOURED OF A MOOR, AND LETS HIM HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HER. SHE ROBS HER HUSBAND, AND THEN TAKES FLIGHT TO BARBARY IN COMPANY WITH THE AFORESAID MOOR AND A TURKISH GIRL. WHEREUPON THE HUSBAND, IN ORDER TO AVENGE HIMSELF, FOLLOWS THEM, HAVING PUT ON A CERTAIN DISGUISE, AND SLAYS THE MOOR AND HIS WIFE. THEN HE RETURNS WITH THE TURKISH GIRL TO TRAPANI, AND, HAVING MADE HER HIS WIFE, HE LIVES WITH HER A LONG TIME IN GREAT HAPPINESS.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT SIGNOR GALEAZZO SANSEVERINO*

EXORDIUM

FORASMUCH as my weary but still unsatiated pen is not equal to the heavy task of setting forth to you by description the deeds, more natural to monstrous beasts than to human beings, which are commonly wrought by members of that most base and wicked female sex, I mean to let all those things concerning which I myself gathered experience in the early years of my youth stand apart from what I have learned about women and their deeds in my present season of old age. Nevertheless, in order to win my way to the end of the journey I have begun, I will not hold back from writing

* Galeazzo Sanseverino was in the service of Ludovico Moro in Milan. On the death of Pietro del Verme by poison, he obtained a grant of all the possessions of the murdered man. Ludovico also gave him his natural daughter in marriage. He went a prisoner with Ludovico to France, and was killed fighting on the French side at Pavia in 1525. See Porzio, book iii., ch. 122.

in this place concerning certain wicked deeds wrought by this evil-natured brood and since become a scandal in the mouths of the vulgar, and from giving full intelligence of the same to all such as are well endowed with virtue and good manners. And, certes, while dealing with these I will not be niggard of my speech you-ward, knowing that it is meet to reckon you amongst the most virtuous, but will tell you a story anent the unnatural and libidinous desire which overcame a certain woman of Trapani. From the hearing of this I doubt not at all—supposing there should still abide within you any faith as to women at large—that you will hereafter abandon all trust in the female sex on account of the hatred you will feel for this woman's crime. Now let me wish that you, free and untrammelled as you are, may find much joy in the course of your flourishing youth. Farewell!

THE NARRATIVE

TRAPANI, a noble city of Sicily, is situated, as many know, in the furthestmost regions of the island, and is, in sooth, almost a nearer neighbour to Africa than any other Christian country, for which reason the Trapanese are often wont, at such times as they may be cruising about in their ships of war, to sail up and down along the shores and the inlets of the country of the Moors, wherefrom they continually gather the most valuable booty. At certain times, however, they suffer defeat and are plundered in their turn, and on this account it often happens that, in order to negotiate as to the ransoms to be paid for the release of prisoners on one side or the other, they arrange a truce between themselves, and transport their merchandize and buy and sell, carrying on their dealings together without hindrance. For the reasons above given it is the case that there are to be found very few Trapanese who are not as well acquainted with the country of the Moors as with their own.

Not a great time ago it chanced that a gentleman of Trapani, called by name Nicolao d'Aguito, in his day

renowned as a most famous corsair, after he had many times harried and despoiled the coasts of Barbary, returned to his home and took to himself as wife a young woman of great beauty; and having had born to him several children by her, he settled down to lead his life in honourable wise. Amongst the other servants and slaves whom he kept in his house was a certain Moor of Tripoli in Barbary, who was called by name Elia, a young fellow strong and robust of body, but ugly beyond all measure. The wife of Nicolao, assailed by hot and unbridled wantonness, having no regard to the breaking of her marriage vow (of which sacrament, indeed, they rarely take much account except they be compelled thereto by circumstance), considering naught either that this fellow was a slave and she a free woman, or that she was fair and he beyond measure hideous, or that she was a Christian, he a Moor, or that by reason of this last-named consideration she would give offence to God, to the law, and to her honour, remembered only that he was young and lusty, and would on this account satisfy her carnal desires better than could her husband. Wherefore she at once set to work with all her will to make trial whether the Moor would know how to bear himself as a valiant man-at-arms in as capable a manner as he used in carrying burdens of inordinate weight upon his shoulders. Having made trial of his powers once and again, and having fully satisfied herself that the judgment she had formed of him had not deceived her, she determined to follow her bent as long as her course of life and her husband's wealth should suffice therefor.

Now, although it seemed that the world must be going very well with the Moor, and that he might for many reasons be quite contented with the game he was called upon to play, nevertheless—seeing that he was by nature akin to the birds of prey, which, being left at liberty, always seek to return to their own abandoned nests, although as long as they are in the keeping of the falconer they are daily fed with excellent and delicate meats, while when they shift for themselves they rarely secure their prey—this Moor, in spite of all the flattering words and the rich gifts and the love lavished upon him without

ceasing by his beautiful mistress, would constantly dream of a flight to his own home. And, as he was both cunning and wicked by nature, he began to put on sad and melancholy humours in the presence of his mistress, and was wont at such times as she showed herself wishful to take her pleasure with him to deny her the same. On account of these moods, she being mightily ill content therewith, urged him continually to let her know the cause of his melancholy, for she was disposed to leave nothing undone which might work for his cure. In answer the Moor let her know in plain terms that he would never be satisfied until he should have returned to his own home, and the lady, when she listened to these words, was smitten with a sorrow the like of which she had never felt before, and she strove with all her powers, using many and most convincing arguments the while, to persuade him to abide contented in his present condition. Nay, further, she promised, if she might thereby win the Moor's approval, to poison her husband in order that they might seize upon his estate. The Moor, however, would not assent to this proposition, but with great cunning stood firm to the resolution he had taken; wherefore she fixed upon the desperate course of eloping with him into Barbary, and when she told him her resolution he listened to her words with exceeding great pleasure.

In order that there might be no delay in carrying out their enterprise, they awaited the season when a fresh and steady Tramontano wind should be blowing, and when Messer Nicolao should be gone to Mazzara to despatch certain business of his. Then one night the Moor and certain other slaves took a ship which had been furnished with all equipment necessary for a voyage, and having carried on board the lady—who had with her a young and very beautiful Turkish girl—with as many light and delicate articles for her use as their hurried flight allowed, they issued forth from the city and took to the ship. They were so well sped by good fortune on their way that on the following day they found themselves close upon the Moorish coast. After they had landed, and all their companions had gone their divers ways into their own lands, Elia, in the company of the lady and

the Turkish girl, journeyed to Tripoli, and there they were received by all his friends with the most sumptuous feasts and rejoicings.

When he had tarried a few days in his house, enjoying the booty he had taken, the Moor, either urged on thereto by the justice of God, which never suffers any wrong-doing to go long unpunished, or convinced by some thoughts which may have sprung from his own brain, determined that it was neither in his power nor in his duty to give either faith or love or hope to this wicked and abandoned woman, who, driven along by her own insatiate lechery, had deceived the husband who had loved her better than he had loved his own life; had abandoned her children, a deed which must of a surety cause no small wonderment, and had forsaken alike her country and the laws of her God. For the reasons aforesaid he began, after the lapse of a few days, to hold her in such savage hatred and disgust that not only was he unable to bestow upon her such caresses as he was wont to give her, but even found it a hard business to speak a word to her. Neither could he trust himself to look towards her; and, beyond this, whensoever she might commit the slightest fault, he would cudgel her as lustily as if he were the captain of a galley and she the slave.* Wherefore the foolish woman, finding herself reduced to a state of extreme wretchedness, began to repent when it was too late, and bewept the misery of her life, together with all the ill-doing of which she had been guilty. In sooth, she would much sooner have died outright than have lived on, and would have welcomed death with the greatest joy as the one cure for all her troubles.

When the wretched Nicolao returned to his home, and heard the most odious and most shameful tidings which awaited him there, everyone who reads will be able to judge for himself how great must have been the grief and the tears and the sorrowing which possessed the poor wight. Indeed, he fell into so desperate a mood that over and over again he came within an ace of plunging a sharp knife into his heart's core, knowing well enough

* Orig., *ed oltre cio per ogni piccola cagione le bastonate andavano da comito di galea.*

that to continue to live, weighed down by such a burden of disgrace, would be much worse than death itself. Nevertheless, after having given way to his grief for a certain time, he began to take thought that he would be greatly lacking in all that was due to the maintenance of his fair fame were he, out of cowardice, to make an end of his life. Wherefore he determined to go like a man, and to lose his life in that same place where he had already lost both his honour and his riches. Now he was at all times a man of great courage, and his nature was farther strengthened by the justice of the undertaking which he had in hand; so, without waiting to take counsel either with his friends or his relations, he bade come together secretly ten or a dozen bold and sprightly young men, and, after they had during the night armed and got in readiness a small bark fit for sea-roving, they set sail together, and directed their course towards the Barbary coast.

After a few days' voyaging, Nicolao arrived at the spot he had been seeking, and when the crew had drawn the ship up on the beach about ten miles distant from Tripoli, he covered her up with the sea-weed, which is very abundant in those parts, and bade his companions conceal themselves withinside the galley, letting no one be aware of their presence, until such time as they would have the opportunity of seizing for themselves a vast booty. Furthermore, he bade them await his return for the space of eight days and no longer; for, supposing that he should not come back within that time, they might hold it for certain that he had either met his death or had been taken prisoner by his adversaries. After he had allowed his beard to grow to some length, and had disguised himself in Moorish clothing, he, being well acquainted with the language spoken by the people of Tripoli, recommended himself to God and departed from his companions, having everything about him in order, and being very eager to carry out the vengeance he had planned against his wife and the Moor.

Now one day, when Nicolao, who indeed knew that country and all the neighbouring parts thereto belonging, but too well, was walking along beside a little river very near to the city, a spot which many women of the place

were wont to frequent for the purpose of blanching their linen, it suddenly came into his mind that perchance the Turkish girl—whom he believed to be much attached to him—might have come there from the house where his wife was abiding, either to fetch water or for some other household task. And then, by the will of chance, who had likewise made ready the vengeance he was to work, and the penalty he was to exact for the losses he had suffered, it was ordained that, at the very moment when he came to the place, he espied the girl making her way back to the house bearing a vessel of water. Wherefore he, hurrying on with rapid steps, overtook her and spake thus, weeping the while: "Lucia, can it be that the great love which I have borne towards you for these many years past—a love which has led me to bring you up in my house as if you had been my own daughter—has found so little place in your heart that you, too, are ready to deceive me?" Lucia, turning round and recognizing her master both by his speech and by his countenance, was overcome by the most heartfelt compassion for him, and ran weeping to embrace him, because in sooth she loved him more than anyone else in the world, and with good reason. Then she implored his pardon, saying that her mistress had induced her to accompany herself and the Moor to that place by using the greatest deceit. Wherefore it seemed to Nicolao, when the girl went on to talk of trifling matters, that this was not the place for such discourse, he being anxious not to lose any more time before he should put into execution the cruel scheme he had devised. So, like an astute man, he determined that he would use as messenger this one who had herself been deceived in the first instance.

After he had let her tell him in a few words of the wretched life which his wife was now leading, he besought her that she would commend him lovingly to his wife, and beg her that she would be pleased to remember him who had loved her and still loved her so very dearly, and likewise to bear in mind the love of her children and her own honour. Also to say how he, having received intelligence even in Trapani of the wretchedness and misery she was suffering, had come after her to place his

life in peril so as to deliver her from all her trouble, thinking not so much of forgiving her the fault she had committed against him as to take her back once more as the mistress of his life and of all his goods. And he spake to the girl many other similar words, all of them seductive and full of flattery—words which might well have moved even a heart of marble to pity. The kind-hearted slave, urged on by the prayers of her beloved master, and overcome by pity, found that for the present she could say or do nothing more than beg him come back to this place at the same hour the next day, and that, with regard to whatsoever yet remained to be done, he should leave the ordering thereof to her.

Having bidden farewell to him and gone back to the house, she told her mistress, with many bitter tears, by what means and on what errand her husband had come thither, letting her know exactly everything he had said and adding that, if in this matter she would deign to follow the advice of her poor servant, she would do well. The girl went on to say that it appeared to her, even if Messer Nicolao should play them false, it would still be better to die quickly and at once by the hand of a Christian, her husband and her lord, than to suffer daily a hundred deaths from a Moor who had formerly been her servant and slave. And thus, urging her by many kind and loving words, she heartened her mistress so much that the unhappy lady, without taking any time to consider her answer, and acting as hastily as when she had lightly, and without any good reason, let herself be carried away by her lust to commit so enormous an offence, made answer to the slave that she was prepared to carry out all the wishes of her husband, without considering at all how richly she deserved punishment at his hands. And after they had discussed together, as women are wont to do, many and various schemes, they settled that on the following night they would, in secret and cautious wise, let Nicolao gain entrance to the house, and afterwards do whatever he might command.

On the following day Lucia went at the usual time for water, and found her master already at the place she had assigned, and rejoicing amain she said to him, "Your

wife is quite ready to carry out whatsoever commands you may lay upon her, and to go hence with you at any time and in whatever fashion you may please to order. Nevertheless, it has seemed good to her, and to me likewise, that you, so as not to let your presence here be known to anyone, should return with me to the house, where we will bestow you in hiding. Meantime we will keep a good watch, and when it shall appear to us that the time is ripe, we will set to work to bring our wishes and your own to the end we desire." Nicolao, lending the most perfect faith to Lucia's words, and knowing at the same time that there was no other way whereby he might bring his scheme to a successful issue, went after Lucia, following her afar off; and, having made good his entrance to the house of the Moor without being seen or heard by anyone, Lucia straightway took him and put him in hiding in a certain dark corner where the firewood was kept—a spot to which no one was wont to go save herself. Here they kept him close for six days on account of an accident which did not allow them to do otherwise, because at this particular time the Moors were celebrating a certain feast, and every evening Elia would entertain a great number of his friends at a sumptuous banquet in his own house, but in spite of this Nicolao was every day visited and fed in his darksome hole, sometimes by his wife and sometimes by Lucia.

After the feasting was over, Elia was left in the house without any other male companion, and he fell into a slumber so sound and heavy that the loudest peal of thunder would scarce have awakened him; whereupon the wife, ignorant of what Messer Nicolao was minded to do, beyond taking her and the Turkish girl away with him, let him be brought into the room where the Moor was sleeping like a log. The husband, when he saw that everything had been got in order as he desired, and that he must needs despatch quickly the affair, gave command to his wife, bidding her lay hands on all the money and jewels that she could carry away, for that he was about to depart forthwith; whereupon she lost her head somewhat and went about the house, opening now this casket and now that. In the meantime Nicolao, having chosen

his time, softly approached the bed where the Moor lay asleep, and, taking in hand a knife meet for the deed, he dexterously severed the veins of the Moor's throat without making any noise, and left him lying there dead. Then he went towards his wife, who was on the floor stooping down beside an open cassone, searching for some jewels which she had seen in the Moor's possession, and having taken with both his hands the lid of the cassone, he let it descend on the neck of his wife, crushing and forcing it down upon her in such wise that he killed her then and there without even letting her cry out "Alas!"

As soon as he had brought this deed to pass he caught up certain bags filled with pistoles, and divers rich jewels and dainty little gems, and, having carefully made of the same a package, threw it into Lucia's lap, who was overwhelmed with fear at the sight of the corpses of the murdered folk, and was standing in dire terror of her own life. Then he spake thus to her: "My daughter, I have now done all the work which my heart willed me to carry out; so nothing now remains except to return to my companions, forasmuch as, with the passing of this night, will come to an end the season during which they were bound to await my return. And I will likewise take you with me, not only because it pleases me so to do, but also as a reward for the great services you have wrought on my behalf. And moreover, from the boon which I mean to confer upon you, you shall judge whether or not I ought to be charged with the vice of ingratitude." Lucia, when she listened to these words, which were in sooth vastly different from what she in her doubt and uncertainty had expected, rejoiced greatly in her heart, and forthwith declared that she was ready to do whatsoever he might command. Thereupon they went silently out of the house, and, having come to the gate of the curtilage, they opened the same by means of certain small instruments of iron which they had brought with them for the purpose. Then they took to their heels and went along at a pace which was rather quick than slow, and in due time they arrived at the place where Messer Nicolao had left his friends, who at that very same mo-

ment were launching their boat in the sea, and getting ready for their departure, for the reason that they had lost all hope of ever seeing him again.

And when they had brought to an end the manifestations of joy they made at the sight of him, they all went on board without any further delay, and, the winds and seas being propitious and calm, they made a short and prosperous voyage to Trapani. When the people heard of their arrival, and knew in what fashion Nicolao had worked his vengeance on the Moor, and how he had punished his wife for her offence, they all praised him highly thereanent, over and beyond the universal delight there was manifested on account of his return. Also Nicolao, so as not to show himself ungrateful for the many benefits he had received from Lucia, took her for his wife, and hereafter found her very dear to him, holding her in great honour as long as he lived.

MASUCCIO

IT may well be said that the wickedness of this woman of Trapani was very great and horrible in its nature—not so much perhaps for the reason that she let herself be mastered by a base slave, as for taking flight with him into Barbary. But, be this as it may, we must assuredly set down the husband as a man of singular virtue, seeing that, without the least reserve, he placed his honour before his life; and, although Fortune was prodigal of her favours in helping him on, it may not be denied that in boldness of heart he showed himself superior to any other man. And what shall we say of the generosity and gratitude which he exhibited towards Lucia, by which he not only changed her from a slave into a free woman, but also joined himself with her in matrimonial union? And certes, seeing that by her aid she restored to him his life, his honour, and his wealth, and let him issue victorious from the undertaking upon which his heart was set, no reward, however great, would have been sufficient for her, except the gift of himself to her, which in sooth he duly made. Therefore it seems to me that,

in what respect soever we may give praise and give it worthily, it should be given especially in the case last named, for in the same measure as ingratitude surpasses every other vice, thankfulness for benefits received outdoes all other virtues. But now, giving over discoursing about this man, and without taking our departure from Sicily, I will tell of another most cruel and almost unheard-of story, of the fate which lately in Palermo overtook a most impious and even fiendish-hearted mother, the telling of which is scarcely in keeping with the decent honest spirit God has given me.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-SECOND NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-third

ARGUMENT

A WIDOW WOMAN BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HER OWN SON, AND BY THE WORKING OF VERY SUBTLE DECEIT CONTRIVES THAT HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF HER. AFTERWARDS, HAVING BECOME WITH CHILD, SHE CUNNINGLY DISCLOSES THIS FACT TO HER SON, WHO, BEING GREATLY INCENSED AT WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, GOES INTO EXILE. THE TRUTH OF THE DEED IS AT LAST MADE PUBLIC, AND THE MOTHER, AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD, IS BURNT TO DEATH BY THE PODESTA.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MARINO BRANCACCIO*

EXORDIUM

IF nefarious human vices are to be condemned by the laws of nature, and by manners and customs approved as righteous, I doubt not at all but that you, you noble and valiant Parthenopean, will play the part of a virtuous man, and will give us the support of your voice in heaping condemnation upon a detestable example of lust, more devilish in sooth than human, which was exhibited by a wicked and abandoned mother in putting a shameful deceit upon her innocent son. Wherefore I trust you will read this with your accustomed prudence and foresight, for I am persuaded that, when you shall have considered well in your mind this abominable deed, you will in the future hold that no female wickedness, however great, concerning which you may have cognizance, would be impossible. Thus in the following discourse surprise and indignation will assuredly wait upon you: Farewell.

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Messer Anastasio Rosello Aretino.

THE NARRATIVE

WHEN, no great time ago, I came back from Palermo, a certain noble citizen, one whose word was well worthy of all belief, told to me as a fact not to be gainsaid that during the year before the last, a certain gentleman of Palermo went the way of nature and passed away from this life, leaving behind him a son who was called by the name of Pino, a youth about twenty-three years of age, rich beyond the mean, of a comely person, and as modest as a maid. Now the mother of this youth, although she was still young in years, furnished with a handsome dowry, and marvelously beautiful in face and figure, made up her mind that, on account of the great love which she had for her son, she would never again enter the married state, and this resolve of hers she made known to her son, who, on his part, ever treated her with the highest consideration and obedience.

For this reason she won the high commendation of many people, and her determination to remain a widow was especially grateful to her son, who, so as not to give her any reason to change her mind and act otherwise, bore himself towards her after a fashion more complaisant, more affectionate, and more obedient than ever yet a son had used towards a mother. Wherefore she felt pleasure and contentment beyond measure, and every day her love for her son grew greater and greater. And as they lived in this wise it came to pass that the mother, while taking heed of the worthiness and the modesty and the physical beauty of her son, was assailed and overcome by a fiery access of lust, and became inflamed with such unbridled desire for him to have knowledge of her that no contrary persuasions which she used to herself had any power to make her abandon her intent, so that she was harassed without ceasing by the thought as to how she might best carry into execution her nefarious design. And because she was sure that a project of this sort would never be brought to an issue with the knowledge and consent of her son, she determined to lure him into the deadly

snare she was preparing for him by means of an artful cheat. So, having by cunning inquiry got intelligence that Pino, albeit he was of a most modest temper, had become enamoured of a certain young girl, a neighbour of theirs, the daughter of a widow of low condition and very poor, but a close friend of her own, she began to hope that she might, by working in this direction, bring her scheme to the desired end.

Therefore one day, having called the good woman to her, she said: "My Garita, as you are a mother yourself, you will be able to understand easily enough how great is the love which parents are bound to entertain towards the children who have been born to them, and more especially towards those who, on account of their singular worth, only cause our natural love to grow and expand exceedingly, as is the case with my son, who is indeed a most excellent youth, one whose accomplished and praiseworthy carriage constrains me by its merits to love him more than I love my own life. Now, for this reason, I, having learned by private inquiry that he is enamoured of your daughter, fear mightily, from the ardent nature of his passion, lest with her modesty on one side and his overpowering love on the other, he may some day or other make a fatal end to his life. And, on the other part, I recognize that you yourself are my most intimate friend, and know full well that you have ever kept intact your honour and good fame, and would never venture to demand of you aught which might in any way come home to you as a dishonour. Nay, rather, for the preservation of your fair fame, I, knowing that you are somewhat straitened in means, am filled with desire to proffer you not only all the aid which my thoughts can furnish, but likewise to make you a sharer in all my possessions, so that by these means you may be assured I am minded to treat you exactly as if I were indeed your mother. Nevertheless, I must tell you that there has just come into my mind a plan by the working of which we may at the same time give satisfaction to my dear son and let the honour of your daughter suffer no hurt, either great or little. To carry out this scheme I would wish that you should, after a manner fitted for the affair, enter into a secret plot with

my son with the understanding that you are willing to sell to him, in consideration of a price to be paid by him, the virginity of your daughter. Then, when the matter shall have been duly arranged, I myself will come to your house and bring with me my waiting-maid, who, as you know, is about the same age as your own daughter, and very fair indeed in person. We will let her go into a dark room, and there, when she shall have gone to bed, she may give reception to Pino, and this in sooth will be exactly the same to him as if he had taken enjoyment of your daughter. I will bid you to have no fear lest anyone should get intelligence concerning this same affair, for the reason that my son excels all the other young men of this city in probity and in keeping private his own business. But if in the future the thing should get noised abroad through any possible accident, I give you my promise in all good faith that I will forthwith let the world know the whole truth as to how it was brought to pass. Thus, by carrying out this plan I shall no longer be in any danger of losing my son by reason of this inordinate passion of love which possesses him, and you will have won for your daughter a dowry, which indeed I am willing to commit at once to your keeping, whereby the integrity of your fair fame will not be tarnished in any degree whatever. We will let Pino enjoy the pasturage we have provided for him until such time as we shall have found a good husband for the young girl, or until he shall choose a wife. Then we will have a great sport and jest together, when we shall make known to him the cheat we have put upon him."

Garita gave faith unquestioning to these words which the lady her neighbour put before her, backed up with so many specious arguments; and, over and beyond this, she saw clearly that no small gain would ensue to her therefrom, without in any way putting a slight upon her daughter's virtue; so, feeling that she was countenanced by her exceeding poverty in doing this thing, besides being urged thereto by the thought of the pleasure she would give her dear friend, she made up her mind to satisfy her wish in full, and with a joyous countenance she made answer that she was ready to carry out all the conditions aforesaid:

Having taken her leave Garita went her way, and on the following day it chanced that she caught sight of Pino, who was passing by her house in decorous fashion, taking what diversion he could find, and spying now and then for a glimpse of the damsel; whereupon Garita in cunning wise began to hold discourse with him, and after having conversed for some time discreetly over many and divers matters, and having likewise drawn from his lips a confession of the hidden and burning passion for the young girl her daughter which consumed him, they began to bargain, and finally came to the agreement that Pino should hand over to her two hundred ducats as the dowry of her daughter, and that he should in return therefor pluck the first flower of her virginity. So as not to keep the affair any great time in suspense through long contrivance, seeing that from the accomplishment of the same there would arise advantage to one side and the other as well, they agreed before they parted that the very next night should witness the consummation of the amorous warfare. Then, having set everything discreetly in order, as to how he should betake himself to the house of Garita, Pino took leave of her.

Garita forthwith made her way to the lady's house, and with a joyful face laid before her all the plans she had prepared, in conjunction with Pino her son, so that they might compass the end which the lady desired. When the lady heard her tell of what she had done she rejoiced amazingly thereanent, and embraced and kissed Garita a hundred times, and, having once more settled between themselves the means which it would behove them to employ in procuring the fulfilment of their design, she filled the hand of Garita with money, so that she might let her depart well content; whereupon the woman went back to her own house rejoicing again. When the appointed hour had struck, the lady, in company with her waiting-maid, went by a private path towards the house of Garita, who straightway led them into a chamber which had been made ready for them, and there left them. Thereupon the lady caused the waiting-maid to withdraw into another room, and there conceal herself; and, having got into the bed which was prepared, awaited, consumed

the while by her unbridled lust, the meeting with her own son.

What words will avail to describe this accursed, abandoned woman, this lustful, swinish wretch, this inhuman and most rapacious beast? Was there in all the world any other woman so diabolically wicked in soul as this, or any other maniac distraught enough to have carried out, or even to have ventured to plan, such a monstrous and detestable incest? Ah! divine justice, tarry not to let such execrable and barbarous crime meet its punishment at the hand of earthly ministers of the law, but when this wicked woman shall make as if she would come anear thee, then quickly let fall upon her thy just wrath and vengeance, and cause the earth to open and swallow her alive.

Pino, when he deemed that the appointed hour had come, entered the house of Garita without suspicion of any sort, and met with a very gracious reception from his hostess, who then led him, like a blind man, through the darkness into the room which had been made ready for his coming. He, holding it for certain that he would find awaiting him in the bed the maiden he loved so dearly, first took off his clothes and then placed himself by her side and began to kiss her in sweet and loving wise. Next, having shown his desire to take for himself some further pleasure with her, she on her side, acting with the most consummate art, made a feeble show of giving him a rebuff and bearing herself like one whose favours could only be snatched by force. She made him believe that he had in sooth, taken the maidenhood of one who had herself greedily devoured his own. She had indeed tricked herself out by the use of certain mendicaments, and by divers arts in such a manner that a boy like Pino, and even others well skilled in the ways of women, might easily have taken her for a young virgin. With regard to the young man, what though he had never before had any experience in nightly occupation of this sort, we may presume that, thinking the while he was working in the ground of someone else and not in his own, and overcome by the great pleasure he found therein, he did not let waste in idleness a single moment.

And when at last the dawn began to whiten, Garita came, and, as it had already been planned, contrived by some fictitious reasoning to let Pino depart by stealth from the house, and then the lady and her maid likewise issued thence by a privy way. And in order to make sure that this one meeting should not be at the same time the first and the last she should have with Pino, she contrived by the employment of some new stratagem to tread the same path almost every night without letting Garita know that the young man had cognizance of anyone except the waiting-maid. Thus while both the one and the other, although for widely different reasons, were mightily well pleased with this amorous diversion, it came to pass that the guilty woman became with child, whereat she sorrowed and grieved beyond measure, and called to her aid all manner of devices in order to keep back the child she had conceived from coming to the birth. But none of these methods were of any avail, and then, when she knew that the affair had come to such a pass that she would no longer be able to keep the same a secret from her son, it would be needless to say how grievous and how many were the woes of her life, the travail of her thoughts, and the anguish of her soul. Nevertheless, helped on by her foolhardy confidence, and reckoning much upon herself and upon her own powers of persuasion that she might be able to induce her son to do, of his own free will, that which he had already done under her cunning beguilement, she determined that she would tell him everything in her own words. Having summoned him one day into a chamber alone, she began in gentle wise to address him thus: "Dear son of mine, you yourself will be able to bear true witness that, if ever a mother loved her son all in all, I assuredly am that one, seeing that I have always loved and still love you more than my own life. And this love of mine has been of such a kind, and has exercised such a power over me, that it has prevented me, what though I am rich and still young, from entering again into the married state, and from committing your wealth and my person into the keeping of strange hands, although, being a woman, I might well have been tormented by the pricks of natural

desire; but, be this as it may, I have never willed to provide for the satisfying of these longings as many women are wont to do, simply in order that I might the better keep unsullied your honour and my own. Besides this, I knew that you were consumed with a fierce passion of love for the young girl who is our neighbour, and likewise that her mother would be ready to suffer death rather than let aught of disgrace fall upon the girl's good name. Wherefore I, being well advised as to the great misery and wretchedness into which lovers are wont to be led by reason of such desperate misadventures, played the part of a mother most tenderly solicitous over your life, and determined, by one and the same deed, to satisfy all the needs and longings afore-mentioned. By acting in this wise I worked an offence indeed against human laws, the work of certain officers of old time, and framed more by cunning and superstition than by right reason, in willing that both your own lusty youth and mine as well should enjoy in secret the delights of love. For know that the young woman with whom you have taken so great pleasure in the chamber of Garita our neighbour, was myself and no one else, and that things have gone with me in such wise that I now find myself with child by you."

After she had finished her speech she showed herself desirous of putting forward more ardent reasonings in order to secure the farther satisfaction of her execrable lust; but her virtuous son, enraged and confounded beyond measure by the abominable nature of the deed which he had wrought, stood as one who feels that the heavens are falling down upon his head, and the solid earth being torn from beneath his feet. Overpowered by such wrath and anguish as had never before wrung the soul of a man, he came very near to plunge a knife into her midmost heart; but, holding himself back somewhat so that he might not become voluntarily a matricide, and the slayer of that unconscious offspring still shut up in its corrupted prison-house, he resolved to leave such vengeance to the hands of those whose right and duty it was to carry out the same. Then, giving speech to all the terrible and vituperative words which it was meet for him to use in the just ruin fallen upon her, and railing and denouncing

his most wicked and abandoned mother, he went forth from her presence.

He straightway gathered together his money and what jewels he possessed, and, having set the rest of his affairs in order as best he could, he awaited the coming of the galleys which were wont to put into Palermo on their voyage to Flanders. After a few days' delay the galleys arrived, and in one of them Pino took passage. But the rumour of what has been here told soon began to spread abroad in the city with all its horror, and, having come to the ears of the Podesta, he forthwith bade them seize the wicked woman, who, without letting herself suffer over much at the hands of the tormentors, confessed the truth of the whole matter exactly as it had come to pass. Then he had her placed and carefully guarded in a convent of women until such time as her child should be born, and when due period had elapsed she was delivered of a male child. Afterwards she was, according to her just deserts, burned alive upon the piazza amidst the cursing and execration of all the people.

MASUCCIO

IF there should ever be amongst those who may read or hear told the novel I have just narrated, anyone who may hold it to be a marvellous thing or impossible, that this guilty woman should have been able—as I have said in my novel—to pass herself off as a fresh young virgin by means of the cunning arts and remedies employed by her, let any such an one who troubles his brain thereanent be assured that what I have written is indeed true. Forasmuch as, when their poisonous lusts may be held in leash by necessity of any sort, women of a nature like this widow's know how to put in operation an infinite number of practices which would be strong enough to make their working felt, not only upon the libidinous bodies of those who employ them, but even upon the throat of a fierce lion. But now, bringing forward in this matter a witness well approved, I cry, "Oh! thou widow,

consummate artist in thy school of knowledge, I charge thee not to let me go on to say aught that is false. Thou knowest my meaning well enough, minister of Satan as thou art! I conjure thee now that thou wilt at least make confession to thyself, if not to the public ear, that, although I may speak and write in faulty wise, I at least say and speak things which are true."

But why do I go about here and there, and thwart my fancy by writing anent the infinite meanness and treachery and wickedness of womankind? In sooth, it would be an easier task by far to number the stars of heaven. Who would ever have believed or reckoned that the widow described in the foregoing novel could have been possessed of aught but a pious and virtuous mind, seeing that she, having been left a widow while she was still young and fair and wealthy to boot, seemed to have cast aside all thoughts of earthly lust, and to have steadily set herself to live a single life on account of the love which she had for her son? Who could have known what evil disposition lay hidden under this specious exterior? But now, because she has received her due guerdon for the deeds she wrought, I will put aside all further discourse concerning her and ask, How many more of these women of honeyed* speech are there amongst us, who by means of frauds like the aforesaid, and even greater, might easily beguile another Solomon? Amongst others are those who feign to be given up entirely to things of the spirit, women whose conversation is ever with priests and monks, talking of naught else but the beatitude of the life eternal, and, with many other tricks and manners full of hypocrisy and superstition enough to make themselves a cause of offence both to God and man, they deceive everyone who may put faith in their falseness.

I say naught concerning the carriage of these as they go about the streets with demure and mincing gait, with such a modest look, and with such high disdain in their glance, as if the very ground smelt rank to them. On account of formal demeanour of this sort, they are reputed by foolish people to be most modest, and filled with the spirit of holiness; and in this mind they condemn the sprightly-

* Orig., *quante sono de le altre sputa-balsamo*.

ness of others, bringing forward as evidence in their favour that proverb which says, "I love a ready-witted woman, but not of my own house." To this dictum I can answer with ease, making a distinction the while that is very true, that women, of whatever condition they may be, ought not to be too ready with the tongue at seasons when there is no need or necessity therefor, lest they should, over and beyond any danger arising from the words they use, run the risk of incurring for themselves a lasting disgrace. But for women to speak in the hearing of all with good courage concerning such things as the necessity of the moment may require to be discussed, or when chance may let them, ought not to be rated as any falling away, or lessening of their fame and honour; and least of all for those who have a clear conscience, and who have kept their virtue intact. In this class I include those women who, however noble and beautiful and young they may be, harbour neither thought nor fear that they can in any wise injure or stain their honour by holding discourse with any man. Rarely or never does evil ensue from conversing in public; the scandals which affront our eyes arise rather from communing in private, and from words bandied in dark corners. God shield me from all such women as never speak at all, either because they know nothing, or because they are minded to play the hypocrite; such as will never open their mouths, what though you place before them ten pots full of honey; who, if a man shall doff his cap to them or greet them, will either give him no answer at all, or, if they do open their mouths, will let him see that they are disposed to make him some disdainful reply. If any gallant youth, adorned with all the virtues, should pay his court to any one of these canting females, she would let herself be killed rather than come to the determination to accede to his wishes. Not that she lets him despair of ultimately winning her good graces. She keeps him on the feed, and from time to time flings to him some vain hope or other. The reason of this demeanour is that she is fain to let the suitor act as the extoller and the herald of her virtue, so that others round about, who are privy to the affair, may be the approving witnesses of her honour, in order that no one may be led

to believe that such a one as she could possibly harbour the thought of falling away from virtue; wherefore she, by these means, is raised to the dignity of Mistress of the Sentences,* and it is made to appear as if no one could or would have lived before her day.

But, on the other hand, at those times when she may chance to be in her own house, if she should foregather with some young kinsman of her own who takes her fancy, and especially if he should be one upon whose cheeks the first down of manhood is beginning to show itself, she will employ so many measures and artifices over her scheme that she will often run into breakneck dangers in order to confirm the relationship. I will let stand aside all mention of those priests who wait upon women of this sort in their houses, and who are made their gossips, following up this step by betraying God Himself, and making St. John the Baptist a go-between for the satisfaction of their libidinous passions. And if this course be denied to them, they will throw themselves at the head of whatever man they can find, and under the assaults of their inborn lust they look round about them to see whether there may not be in the house some well-grown lad who would be lusty at the work they require of him, and then, with all kind of lascivious scheming, they draw him into their embraces. In what manner they are wont to play the harlot with such as these God will let you know through these writings of mine, and if they sin not with a lad of this sort there will never be wanting some muleteer or some black Ethiopian. Let that man who does not believe I am speaking the truth take observation for himself in the well-verified matter set forth in the novel which comes hereafter, and then forsooth there may well come over him the desire to exclaim with me, Would that it had been God's pleasure and Nature's to suffer us to have been brought forth from

* *Maestra de Sententie*. The Master of the Sentences was Peter Lombard, Bishop of Paris, a famous schoolman, who died in 1160. His work, "*Sententiarum Libri IV.*," is a collection of arguments taken from the Fathers, and destined to meet all possible objections to orthodox doctrine. Nevertheless, the doctors of Paris detected heresy in it, and it was condemned in 1300.

the oak-trees, or indeed to have been engendered from water and mire like the frogs in the humid rains of summer, rather than to have taken our origin from so base, so corrupt, and so vilely-fashioned a sex as womankind! But now, leaving them to go to perdition in their own way, I will with gladness let follow my next novel,

THE END OF THE TWENTY-THIRD NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-fourth

ARGUMENT

A YOUNG MAN LOVES A CERTAIN LADY WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIM IN RETURN. WHEREUPON, HAVING CONCEALED HIMSELF IN HER HOUSE, HE SEES FROM THE PLACE WHERE HE IS HIDDEN A BLACK MOOR TAKING HIS PLEASURE WITH HER. THE YOUNG MAN COMES FORWARD, AND WITH MANY INSULTING WORDS REPROVES THE WICKED NATURE OF THE WOMAN, AND FINDS HIS FORMER LOVE FOR HER TURNED TO HATRED.

TO THE EXCELLENT COUNT OF ALTAVILLA

EXORDIUM

BECAUSE it is my wish, most excellent Signor, to dedicate to you the novel which I have now in hand, I have determined, so as not to turn my pen against those who have never given me any occasion for offence, to keep silent in this story, not only concerning the present condition of the lady and of the lover, but also to conceal the name of the city in which the events of this story came to pass. In it I will let you hear of a strange and very painful adventure which befell a certain ill-starred lover, who found himself brought to such a pass that he was forced to take a part which could not have been, otherwise than most irksome to a man of his high and gentle nature, even after canvassing fully the same. On this account I beg you—if at any time after reading what is aforesaid written you may find yourself hot-blooded and warmed with the fire of love—that you will give me at your pleasure a well-balanced opinion of the adventure, and tell me what course the unhappy lover should have followed, and whether or not he deserves praise with regard to the issue.

THE NARRATIVE.

IN a famous city of Italy there lived not long ago a certain youth of no mean station and influence, very comely to look upon both in face and figure, of most courteous manners, and abounding in every virtue, to whom a thing happened which in sooth happens not seldom to young men of his sort, that is to say, he became very deeply enamoured of a gracious and beautiful lady, the wife of one of the foremost gentlemen of the city aforesaid. And the lady becoming aware of this passion of his, and marking how every day he went about scheming and contriving some method by which he might win his way into her good graces, determined, as is the inborn habit of women, to entangle the poor wight by the working of her art and ingenuity, in her craftily-laid nets on the very first occasion when they might accidentally foregather. To accomplish this task did not cost her much travail; and as soon as she was assured that she had him in hold in such a fashion that it would be no easy matter for him to withdraw himself from the toils, she soon began to let him see little by little that she had scant liking for him, so that he might not for any length of time taste any pleasure or contentment by reason of his love. Thus she went on without ceasing to show him that she set very little store upon himself or upon anything that he did.

On account of this treatment the luckless lover had to endure a life of discontent and intolerable vexation, and, taking account that all his jousting and lavish spending of money, and all the other notable services which he performed on her behalf without intermission, worked no advantage to his cause, but rather seemed to furnish occasion for some fresh show of disdain from her, he essayed over and over again to withdraw himself from the enterprise which he had in hand, and to let his thoughts wander in some other direction. But whenever it became apparent to the lady that he was turning his mind towards this purpose, and that his amorous fervour

showed signs of cooling, she would straightway in some fresh fashion of beguilement favour him anew, and thus induce him to set about playing the same game as heretofore. Then, when she knew that she had lured him back according to her plan, she would once more trim her sails for the contrary course, and bring him again into a state of wretchedness. And this deed she would execute with all the skill of an artist, not merely for the sake of vaunting herself as one of the company of honest and beautiful women, for the reason that she had kept so proper a lover in suspense so long, but also that the lover himself might serve as testimony of her simulated virtue, whereby everyone would be constrained to regard as false any evil doings of hers which might hereafter become publicly known.

It thus happened that the ill-fated youth, spending his life for several years in such evil and blameworthy case, without winning for himself so much as a single word to give him hope, determined that, even though he should meet his death thereby, he would stealthily break into the house of the lady, and there work out his purpose as fortune might allow. Wherefore, having got advice as to the season when the gentleman, the husband of the lady in question, would go forth from the city on certain business of his own, and be absent therefor several days, he carefully made entrance to the premises late one evening, and hid himself in an outhouse adjoining the courtyard which was used for storing fodder. He then took his stand behind some empty casks which had been bestowed there, and in this station he remained all the night through, buoyed up with the hope that when the lady should quit the house next morning and betake herself to church, he might be able to find an opportunity of gaining entrance to her chamber, and, once there, to hide himself under her bed, so that the following night he might make trial of his final venture. But, as was the will of his fate, which in sooth ever followed upon his traces, giving him a worse to-morrow for a bad to-day, the lady did not stir out of the house that morning on account of some unlooked-for accident; therefore the young man, having kept his station until the time of

nones, * with all the pain and patience he was wont to feel and exercise, without any result, made up his mind still to abide there until the following morning. He took a scanty meal off some sweetmeats which he had brought with him for that purpose, and with much weariness of spirit, and with mighty little hope he kept himself without making a sound in the hiding place aforesaid.

Now when a good part of the day had rolled by, he heard a noise and saw come into the courtyard a muleteer, a black Moor who belonged to the household, bringing with him two loads of firewood, which he began to unload forthwith in the courtyard. On account of the noise which he made the lady went to her chamber-window, and at once took to rating the Moor that he had spent so long a time over his errand, and had brought back with him such a mean and miserable lot of wood. The Moor gave her little or nothing in the way of answer, but simply went on easing his mules in their harness and adjusting their packsaddles; and, this done, he entered the storehouse wherein the young man lay concealed in order to fetch some oats for his beasts. As soon as he had finished his task, lo and behold! the lady appeared and went likewise into the storehouse, and after plying the Moor with words of the kind she had lately thrown at him by way of banter, she began to sport with him in tender wise with her hand; and as she went on from one endearment to another, the wretched lover, who stood wonder-stricken, and for his own sake wishful that he could have been worse even than a Moor, if only he could have won the favour which was now being granted to the black without any labour on his part, beheld the lady go and make fast the door, and then, without further ado or demur, throw herself down upon the mules' saddles which lay there, and draw the horrible black fellow towards her. He, without waiting for any farther invitation, at once set himself to his task, and gave the vile wanton what she desired. Alas for you, you goodly youths! Alas, for you, you loyal and blameless lovers! who are wont without ceasing to place your honour and your riches and your life as well in jeopardy for the sake of women

* Three o'clock in the afternoon.

faithless and corrupt as this one: Come forward every one of you at this point of my story, and let each one, bearing in mind the while his own case, give me, according to the best judgment he can use, a righteous opinion as to what would have been the meetest course for the wretched youth to follow at this supreme juncture: Certes, according to my own humble understanding, any design of vengeance which he might have framed in his mind with respect to the deed which he had now seen done before his very eyes, would have failed to do full justice.

But to complete my story I will narrate to you truly; what the poor young man felt stirred up to do, after hastily taking counsel with himself. When he had looked upon this deed as aforesaid, and had felt that it went beyond his power to endure the same (his fervent love being changed meantime to hate), he came forth from his lurking-place with his naked sword in his hand, harbouring in his mind the fell purpose of putting an end to the lives of both of them at one thrust; but in that moment of time he felt himself withheld by a certain whisper of reason; which bade him consider well the shameful use he would be making of his sword in staining it with the death of such a base hound, and of such a vile and abandoned woman, as he now deemed her whom he had heretofore rated as the very flower of virtue. Wherefore, having rushed upon them with a terrible cry, he said: "Ah me! how woebegone and wretched is my life, how horrible, how monstrous are the deeds which my cruel fortune has brought before my eyes!" Then, turning towards the Moor, he said: "You, insolent dog that you are, I know not if there be aught for me to say to you, after giving you a word of praise anent your forecast in this matter, except to tell you that I shall remain for ever your debtor because you have delivered me out of the clutches of this savage bitch, who has, in sooth, bereft me of all my welfare and peace of mind." The lady, as soon as she beheld her lover, grew pale as one half dead, and everyone may judge for himself what manner of thoughts possessed her. She, who would sooner have been brought face to face with death—and with reason

—had in the meantime cast herself down at the feet of her lover, not to cry him mercy, but to beseech him that he would without farther tarrying give her the death-stroke which was her just meed. Thereupon he, who had by this time made ready the reply he was minded to give her, said: “Oh, wicked and most wanton she-wolf, shame and eternal infamy of all the residue of womankind! through what frenzy, through what passion, through what lustful desire have you suffered yourself to be overcome and subjected to a black hound, a brute beast, or, as it is more meet to say, a monstrous spawn of the earth, like this snarling cur to whom you have given, as a repast, your own corrupt and infected flesh? And though it might appear to you a fine thing to let me be torn and harassed all these years for the sake of this fellow, ought you not at least to have had some care for your own good repute, for the honour of mankind, and for the love which is borne to you by your husband, as well as that which you are in duty bound to bear towards him? He, certes, appears to me to be the most gallant, courteous, and accomplished gentleman now living in this land of ours. Of a surety I know not what else to say than to affirm that you women in the main, unbridled crew as you are, cannot be induced—when you are concerned with those matters which make for your lustful indulgence—by shame, or by fear, or by conscience, to draw any distinction between master and servant, noble and peasant, comely and frightful, so long as, according to your faulty judgment, the fellow upon whom your choice may fall is able and willing to play a lusty part between the sheets. As to that same death which you beg me with such persistence to give to you, it does not seem that you need ask it at my hands so pressingly, forasmuch as, with your name so blackened and disgraced and clouded with shame, you may well and truly reckon yourself as being even worse than dead in the future. Nay, rather I am fain you should still live on in the world, in order that you may be to your own self a testimony of your own unutterable crimes; and that, as often as you may get sight of me, you may suffer anew the pangs of death in calling back to memory your former life, and all the squalor

thereof. Wherefore, abide still here on earth, and may bad luck cling to you; indeed, the savour which arises from your tainted person is so great and so foul that I cannot endure to remain any longer in your neighbourhood."

And then, because it was late, he went his way and returned to his own house, without being perceived of anyone, and the lady, who had not given him a single word in reply to what he had said, withdrew sadly to her own room, letting fall many piteous tears. The young man after this adventure gave up the use of the banner which he had heretofore borne in his jousting and tilting matches, and caused to be made another one which carried as a device a fierce black greyhound holding in its paws and its teeth the naked figure of a very beautiful woman, which it was rending and devouring. Every time that the lady saw this ensign it was to her as if an icy blade were being plunged into the very core of her heart, and in such wise this wicked woman, being thus vexed every day, was pierced and torn in spirit without respite.

MASUCCIO

ON account of the monstrous nature of the incident which I have just set before you, I am doubtful whether we should give the lover our highest praise in that he did the one thing which became a man of noble spirit to do, or heap our censure upon the wicked woman, seeing that she, in a way exactly similar, put into practice those same methods which all the others, who are even worse than she, use when nothing happens to interrupt the easy working of their designs. We may therefore hold it as an undoubted fact that those women are indeed rare who, when the opportunity may be given, do not go pirating the goods of whomsoever they may meet—a fact of which every day gives us clear testimony, and our belief in it may be yet further confirmed by the novel which follows. In this the young woman whom I intend to make the subject of my story, the one and singu-

lar daughter of her father, desired to be also one and singular in making choice of the very worst of all the many lovers who came to woo her:

THE END OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-fifth

ARGUMENT

A YOUNG GIRL IS BELOVED BY MANY SUITORS; AND WHILST FEEDING THEM WITH HOPE, COZENS THEM ONE AND ALL. ONE OF THESE PURSUES HER MORE CLOSELY THAN THE OTHERS. SHE, HOWEVER, HAS CRIMINAL CONVERSE WITH A SLAVE OF THE HOUSE, WHO LETS THIS THING BE KNOWN TO THE LOVER. WHEREUPON SHE DIES OF GRIEF, AND THE YOUNG MAN, HAVING PURCHASED THE SLAVE, LETS HIM GO FREE.

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, MESSER GIULIO
D'ACQUAVIVA, DUKE OF ATRI*

EXORDIUM

FOR the reason that I am advised, my illustrious and worthy sir, that you have many a time gathered no small diversion from the reading of my rude unpolished novels, and spoken fair of the same in many words of praise, I am in no way minded to withhold from you your portion of these fruits of mine which seem to please your taste. And because I have, in this part of my book, let fly my shafts at womankind as a target, I am fain to inscribe one of the missiles aforesaid to you, as one who has a good knowledge of this perverse brood; in order that, in the company of any other of their misdeeds which may have come under your notice, this one may cause you to take up, in a worthy spirit and when occasion may arise, the just quarrel which I have with the whole sex. In this wise you will every day lay me under a still greater obligation to you.

* He was one of the ablest leaders employed by Ferdinand I. He was killed fighting against the Turks in the campaign of Otranto.

THE NARRATIVE

ACCORDING to a report which I once heard from the mouth of a merchant of Ancona, there lived in that city not a great while ago a very rich merchant, well known all through Italy, who had an only daughter named Geronima, very young and beautiful, but vain beyond measure. Now this damsel, who thus gloried herself overmuch on account of her beauties of person, was firmly set in the belief that the greater the number of lovers she might each day bind to her service the greater would be the price at which her beauty would be appraised. For this reason she not only kept fast bound to her all those whom she had already ensnared, but she turned her thoughts to no other aim than to devise plans for the capture of still more victims by new arts of beguilement. So, without letting any one of them ever have a taste of the supreme fruit she held in store, she fed them with wind and leaves and flowers, but she never suffered one of them to go out of her presence altogether void of hope.

And while she went on priding herself over this game of trifling, it chanced that a certain youth of a very noble house, of a comely person and well endowed with all the virtues, applied himself with keener ardour than any others of the suitors had put forth to the task of winning this finished artist in coquetry. In sooth, he let himself be borne away so far into the depths of the sea of love that, notwithstanding the difference and disparity of their several estates, he would assuredly have taken her to wife if it had not been that he, being a poor man, deemed that others would have held him worthy of censure for that he, out of meanness of soul or greed of wealth, had thus made a market of his ancient nobility. Nevertheless, the father of the young damsel aforesaid plied him with importunity without ceasing, setting before him how great would be the profit and advantage which must accrue to him through an alliance of this sort. But the young man, albeit he did not look upon any of these proposals with favour, contrived nevertheless with

great ingenuity to keep the business in suspense, so that he might determine whether he might not by a cunning trick bring this scheme to a successful issue. Thus, having planned to enter into relations with some one or other of the household of the young girl, he found that the only one of the servants he could use for this purpose was a certain black Moor belonging to her father, a youth named Alfonso, and for a Moor not ill-looking. He was wont to go about with a stout strap, and let himself out at a price, to carry burdens on his back for whomsoever might have need of his services.

Now the young man, under the pretence of employing this fellow for some errand, would often let him come to his house, treating him with much kindness and caressing, giving him plenty of good things to eat and money to spend on his pleasures, alluring him in such wise that in the end Alfonso became more devoted to him than to his rightful master. Then, as soon as the young man was fully assured that he might trust the Moor, he began to ask him to speak fair of him in the damsel's hearing; and, continuing to discourse in the same strain, he said one day, "My good Alfonso, if in sooth there be any man in the world of whom I am envious, it is of you; forasmuch as fortune gives you free leave to behold and to address your mistress whensoever you wish." And with these and with other very passionate words he went on without ceasing, tempting the slave to listen to him and to do him the service he desired. Wherefore the Moor, who was indeed in no wise lacking in wit and caution, and who was likewise in a measure cognizant of his master's intention to make a match between this young man and his daughter, determined that it would be a grievous waste if such a worthy and well-mannered gentleman as this should, under the name and guise of matrimony, be entangled in toils so fraudulent. So one day in his ill-wrought speech he bade the young man to lay aside entirely this love of his, for the reason that Geronima was a most evil-minded girl, and that he himself had many a time had intercourse with her, having done this thing rather by compulsion than of his own free will. When the poor young lover heard spoken such monstrous

words as these, it seemed to him as if his soul was taking its flight from his body; however, collecting his wits somewhat, he put to the Moor many narrow and searching questions, only to find himself more clearly convinced, especially as Alfonso in the end offered to let him see the fact for himself, and as it were to touch it with his own hand—a proposition which he most readily accepted.

In order to carry out this scheme without letting waste any long time over the same, he caused to be made for himself forthwith a strap or band exactly similar to that worn by the Moor, with a certain device thereto by means of which he could put it on or take it off at will in such wise as is the habit of porters. On that same night, when he had determined to betake himself to witness the monstrous spectacle which was to be shown to him, he went to a painter who was his friend and had himself painted black from head to foot, and then, when he had put on certain rags which belonged to the Moor, together with the porter's band, and had changed himself in his carriage and in every other necessary respect, no one would have taken him for aught else than a real porter. As soon as it was nightfall he was led by Alfonso into the merchant's house, and was furthermore made to lie down on a mean, dirty bed. Then the Moor, after he had given full information as to the wonted doings of the abandoned girl, went his way to sleep in the stable.

The young man had not waited a great time before he heard a sound which told him that the door of the place where he lay was being stealthily unfastened, and when it was fully opened he saw and recognized Geronima, the damsel whom he had loved beyond all others, enter the place, bearing a little candle in her hand and glancing on every side to see whether peradventure some other one might not have come into the room. But when she saw that, according to her belief, there was no one else therein except her Alfonso, she went close beside the bed, and, remarking that he was black and suspecting nothing, she quenched the light and lay down by his side, and began straightway according to her wont to awake the sleeping beast.

The wretched lover, when he saw things had so fallen out

that, in order to accomplish what he had hitherto desired beyond aught else, he must needs have his heart wrung with grief—when he discovered that his lover's anguish had shaken his manhood in such wise that he would vainly attempt the end he had looked to attain—was several times on the point of letting it be known who he was, and assailing the unparalleled wickedness of the young girl with unbounded and scathing rebukes. But after carefully considering the affair, he reckoned that he would not himself get full satisfaction from the adventure, except it should be duly brought to its appointed issue, and except the damsel should in the end be left by him covered with shame and grief and sorrow. Whereupon he determined once for all to put compulsion on his humour, chilled as it was by grief and indignation, and then, by a punishment of the sort aforesaid, to work vengeance upon the girl, not only on his own account, but likewise on account of all the many others who had been befooled and flouted by her. So with no slight difficulty he brought to completion the course he had resolved to pursue. And when he had done this, he began to address her, his indignation raging strong and fierce as ever, in the following words: "Ah foolish, insensate, profligate wretch, headstrong and insolent beast that you are! Where are now all the charms with which you were wont to trick yourself out? Where is now your pride, you who deemed yourself fair beyond all others, and imagined in your haughtiness that, with the aid of this and of your wealth, you could touch the very heavens with your head? Where are those broods of ill-starred lovers of yours, wretches whom you fed with false hopes, while every day you mocked and derided them? Where is now that foolhardy insolence which led you to seek to get me for your husband? What manner of flesh was it you were minded to give me for my enjoyment? Was it the same which you had already given as a meet repast to a black carrion crow, to a filthy porter, to a savage hound, clad in vile rags and loaded with chains? As you must of a certainty be aware, I have ever been careful how I might with all manner of artifices deck out my person with divers fine garments, and use pleasant odours,

solely with the desire of exhibiting myself in your sight in fashion which would please you; but, finding that naught I could do proved of any avail, I bethought me of putting on this dress, the habit of the basest menial, in which you saw me when you first came in. Of this you assured yourself by examining me closely with a lighted candle, and were no doubt mightily pleased with what you thought you had found. And afterwards I, as you yourself must know well, found it no light task to labour in the field which by right belongs to this Moor. Before this you will, I doubt not, have discovered by the sound of my voice that I am the man whom you have befooled and fed with wind for these many years past by means of your wheedling looks. Moreover, it grieves me to think that you, beguiled by holding me so completely under your yoke, may have been able to boast in the past that you had bettered your former condition a hundred thousandfold; though, indeed, you may now set this down as your last bit of good fortune, for be assured that I would rather let myself be cut in quarters than ever again admit that you are worthy of being mated with myself. Nor need you flatter yourself that you will be able, as heretofore, to let quench your hot lust in the arms of your beloved Moor; for it is by his hand that I now find myself unshackled from the bonds which your lures have cast around me, and as some reward for the great service he has wrought me I have determined to make a free man of him and release him from the servitude he owes to your father. And if you should ever henceforth take it upon yourself to dupe or to feed with false hopes any goodly youths in such fashion as you have befooled them in the past, or to put your flouts upon them anew, be well assured that this scheming of yours will be baulked, forasmuch as I myself will set to work to let this abominable wickedness of yours become the public talk in every part of this our city, and I will make your name the byword in the mouths of the common folk, and thereby let eternal disgrace fall upon you. In sooth, I shall never deem that I have vituperated you enough for the vile and wicked profligacy you have practised. But these rags which I now wear, and

the clothes upon this bed—which have been to you heretofore so gracious and sweet-smelling and pleasant—stink in my nostrils so horribly that I am constrained to go my way forthwith; therefore get you gone quickly hence, and on your way call for me your worthy lover, who is waiting in the stable, in order that he may convey me privately out of this dark prison in which I am not inclined to tarry any longer.”

The woebegone and most wretched Geronima, who indeed knew full well who was the man she had with her the very first word he spoke, would assuredly have made an end straightway to her miserable life had a knife meet for such a deed been in her hand. All the time he was speaking, she, without giving him back a single word in reply, went on with her bitter weeping, and at last, according to his command, she got up from the bed and called the Moor in a soft voice. Then, as the young man wished, she let them both out of the house, and after she had locked the door she returned to her own chamber, and there, under the colour of some excuse, she thenceforth remained grief-stricken to death, and shedding as many tears as a well full of water would have supplied. In a few days' time she died, whether by grief or by poison I know not. The noble youth, having let the whole affair get noised abroad, and having likewise enjoyed no small pleasure from the punishment and death of the young girl, purchased the Moor and set him at liberty. He himself, now that he was delivered and unfettered from his passion, lived happily for a long time, taking much pleasure in his lusty youth.

MASUCCIO

WHAT man having listened to this novel will hereafter nurse any doubts concerning the crowning profligacy of womankind? If he should turn over in his mind the stories I have told, will it not appear to him as though he had seen the same with his own eyes? I, who from very shame of myself am kept back from telling you (for I, like the rest of men, was born of a

woman) how, when they are assailed by overpowering lust and unbridled rage, they employ certain means for saving their credit, in order that, as they believe, their offence may be less. If you who read this understand my meaning, there is no need for me to say anything more to you; but if you should still be in doubt, then find someone else who may declare the purport of these obscure terms of mine. I am still bound to write of divers others who, being blinded by their fiery lust, and fearing that their secret should be known, or that they should abase themselves to the conversation of men of mean estate, have not shrunk from submitting themselves to brute beasts—things of which I have heard tell as the very truth, and have myself had experience, even as a matter which I could touch with my own hands, Such nefarious working as this is in sooth for the most part practised by the very women who hold themselves to be wise beyond all others.

I may affirm for certain that motives akin to the afore-said must have induced a certain wary and sagacious dame to act the part which I am about to describe to you in my next novel: how she, being of a sudden seized with love of a very goodly youth, still knew how to keep herself so well within bounds that the young man (although she got all from him she wanted) was never suffered to know who she might be. If other women would take an example from this one, of a surety the names of very few of them would be bandied about in the mouths of men.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-sixth

ARGUMENT

A LADY BEING ENAMOURED OF A SEEMLY YOUTH CAUSES HIM TO BE BROUGHT BLINDFOLDED INTO HER CHAMBER BY A DISGUISED CONFIDANT OF HERS. THEN, AFTER HAVING PASSED THE NIGHT WITH HIM, SHE DIRECTS HIM TO COME THITHER AGAIN, BUT THE YOUTH HAVING TOLD HIS ADVENTURE TO A FRIEND OF HIS, THE LADY HEARS OF WHAT HE HAS DONE, AND LETS HIM COME TO HER NO MORE.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT FRANCISCHELLA DE MORISCO*

EXORDIUM

MANY a time when I have been conversing with you, my magnificent and most highly esteemed gossip, I remember having remarked in my haste that, although it is a rare thing to find a woman who may be commended as being prudent, seeing in what faulty wise Nature has made them, still there may be found some who are better advised than others—women who, while they are not strong enough to beat back their lustful desires, and on this account are ever seeking out some new and cunning schemes for the satisfying of the same, are in less degree deserving of our censure. These, indeed, go no farther than to violate the law, and work no outrage on their weak natures, but secretly satisfy their appetites. And inasmuch as in the novel which follows we shall both of us be confirmed in this our belief, so that you, taking this novel in conjunction with those which you have heard already, may by con-

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Madonna Fioretta Aliprandi.

ferring with yourself deliver a true judgment whether, setting aside the sin of which she was guilty, the woman I shall tell of may be held to be in a certain measure worthy of praise, or whether she should be reckoned as one only meet for the company of other wicked women. Farewell!

THE NARRATIVE

DURING that time when the Pistoian was running from one end of our kingdom to the other and working such a vast number of miracles, the strange accident which is written below verily and indeed came to pass in the city of Naples. The thing happened one Saturday evening in the month of March, when the people were going in a crowd to the church of the Carmine, and amongst them was a bevy of fair ladies, who, having as they imagined received full absolution, were seized with the desire to return to their homes by traversing the outskirts of the city. When they had come to that street which crosses by the Padule, it chanced that they met a band of young men, who were no less remarkable for their grace and beauty of person than for their noble bearing, and these youths, for their diversion and for pleasant exercise, were playing the game of Palla del Maglio.* Whereupon it came to pass that a certain one of the ladies aforesaid, endowed with very great beauty and with wit still greater, let her eyes fall upon one of the young men, a youth attired in a doublet of green damask. So strongly was she moved to pleasure at the sight of him that she felt as if she must needs fall into a swoon. Nevertheless she contrived by her prudent carriage to conquer her amorous mood without let-

* The game of Pall Mall. Pepys writes, April 2nd, 1661: "To St. James's Park, where I saw the Duke of York playing at Plemele, the first time I ever saw the sport." It was probably introduced into England from France. There is an interesting article on the game in the "*Archæological Journal*," vol. xi., p. 253.

ting appear any sign thereof, and went back to her home in company with the others, bearing the while in her heart the most overpowering passion for the youth who had so greatly pleased her.

She began at once to run over in her mind all the many and divers methods she could employ whereby she might win for herself full and complete satisfaction of this love of hers; but, although love had now gained possession of the chief place in her heart, she was not yet so completely distraught in her wits as not to know how rarely it happens that anyone who may have resolved to give full rein to amorous passion is able for any long time to keep secret the matter, let the web have been woven ever so privily, forasmuch as there is no one in the world who has not about him some perfect friend or other to whom he is wont to tell the story of all his worthy deeds and his culpable ones as well. Then this same friend will surely possess a like confidant of his own from whom he can in no wise conceal either his own secrets or those of others, and thus, passed on from one mouth to another, the brief felicities of lovers are full often wont to come to an end in long misery.

With regard to this matter you must know that, after long pondering, the lady came to a decision either to let this passion of hers, by the working of a novel stratagem, run on to its full and perfect end, or to withdraw herself entirely therefrom; although, in this latter case, she might find her desire so powerful that the frustration of it might prove her death. To let the plan she had devised be put forthwith in execution she went to a kinsman of hers in whose fidelity she could trust, and to him she laid bare the story of her passion, and in a few words gave him command to do what she told him. This kinsman, who was well inclined to do her bidding, straightway clothed himself in a sack of the sort which the penitents of the confraternity are wont to wear, and this done he went in search of the young man he had been sent to find; and, meeting him by chance apart from the company of his friends, the messenger drew him aside, and, having a piece of cane in his mouth, spake thus to him: "Good brother, if you would meet with an adventure

which cannot fail to profit you, see that you be this evening between the first and the second hour in the church of San Giovanni Maggiore." And having thus spoken he went his way.

The young man was mightily astonished when he listened to this request, and, after he had turned over the matter in his mind many times, he came to the conclusion that it must needs be somewhat of weighty import: wherefore, putting full trust in himself, inasmuch as he was young, of high courage and sprightly, and being assured, over and beyond this, that there would be no one at the place aforesaid whom he could suspect of any forethought to work him an injury, he determined, without seeking counsel from any of his friends, that he would go and put his fortune to the test; so, when the appointed hour had come, and when he had taken divers trusty weapons, he went to the place named with a stout heart and full of courage. As soon as he had come to the spot; he saw approaching him the confidant of the lady, who was now clad in a disguise differing from the sack which he had worn in the morning, so that no one would have known him for the same. He greeted the young man graciously, and, speaking in a low tone so that his voice might not betray who he was, he said: "My friend, it seems to me that kindly Fortune now approaches you, offering you the highest favours for your lasting gain as well as for your present and future contentment, if you will only show yourself wise, and give her joyful welcome. The fact is that a certain lady, young, beautiful, and beyond measure rich, is so mightily enamoured of you that she is altogether distraught and consumed by her passion, and has finally resolved to offer you the boon of taking the first fruits of enjoyment of her person before any other man, and of partaking of her wealth as well. Nevertheless, she is minded, in order that she may for a few days have experience as to whether you know how to bear yourself with silence and secrecy, that you should enter her presence with me veiled in such wise that you can gather no cognizance of herself, or of her house, or of the quarter in which she dwells. If you will consent to do this, let us at once set out on our way; but if by

any chance the good fortune which now calls you, without putting upon you aught of labour or trouble, should not seem to your liking, you may go your way in God's name, for I am strictly charged not to bring you except of your own free will."

The young man, when he first heard the gist of the speech aforesaid, deemed that the enterprise would be a difficult one, and it would moreover be a strange thing to be led away thus blindfolded, almost as if he were a goat being taken to the shambles; still, when he considered that he need fear no peril to his person, seeing that the man before him had left to him the choice to go or to stay; and reckoned that beyond this there could follow naught which would not prove to be advantageous to him, he determined, without further thought thereanent, to risk the adventure, and made answer to the messenger that he was ready to go with him wherever and in whatsoever fashion it pleased him. Whereupon the other brought out a thick veil, and, after he had covered the young man's eyes and drawn off his biretta, he took him by the arm, and the two set forth on their way. He led the youth on from one street to another; they entered divers houses and issued therefrom again; and when at last it seemed to him that the time had come, he led the gallant into the lady's house. Then, after he had made him go up and down the divers staircases which were therein several times, he brought him at last into the chamber where his coming was looked for with such ardent longing, and, having removed the veil from his face, he left him there and locked the door.

The young man, as soon as he let open his eyes, knew naught else than that he was in a dark room in which there was nothing to be seen, but he soon became conscious of a delicious odour which arose from whomsoever might be near him. While he was standing somewhat overcome by amazement at his strange position he felt a woman's arms close round him in joyful wise, and a soft voice spake thus: "Welcome art thou, the sole support of my life!" And without uttering another word she gave him a sign that he should undress, which thing he did readily enough, and then, when she had duly disposed

herself, they got into the bed together. Now, for the reason that at a time like this neither one of them had any need to speak a word, they occupied themselves in such manner that they lay not idle for a single moment all that night. As soon as the hour drew nigh when the lady deemed that it was meet she should let the young man go forth from her house, she took a purse full of golden florins which she had prepared for this purpose, and, once more embracing him in loving wise, and speaking softly in order that he should not be able to recognize who she was, she said to him: "My sweet soul, take now these few coins, which may be of some use to you for your present need, and leave all thought and care for the future to her who now holds you in her arms. See, moreover, that you bear yourself in prudent wise, and take care lest your tongue, while meaning only to put a slight upon my honour, may not work the ruin of your abiding joy. Indeed, when you may least look for such a thing, I will let your eyes have a feast of what will delight them not a little. But in the meantime think it not a hard thing that you are brought hither in such wise. When I shall be in the humour to receive you again, I will send for you in similar fashion." Then, after she had once more kissed him and had received from him a countless number of sweet kisses, she bade him put on his clothes, and called for her trusty messenger, who once more bound the young man's eyes with a veil, and led him by a devious path to the spot where he had met him on the previous evening, and, having left him there, went back to his own house.

Thereupon the young man, having removed the veil from his eyes, made his way home, marvelling amain and rejoicing in heart over what had befallen him. In sooth he was wellnigh beside himself with curiosity to know who the lady might be; and, finding that he could not by his own efforts discover aught, he came to the conclusion that there was no reason why he should keep the story of his great good fortune, and his mental travail over the same, a secret from a certain comrade of his who was his particular and most trusty friend. Wherefore, having sent for him, he told him everything concerning what

had recently happened, without taking any further heed as to what he did.

He now began to work in the company of this friend to try to bring to light somewhat concerning his adventure, but for the reason that neither the one nor the other could in any way hit the mark, they resolved to suffer the business to run on in whatever course should be determined by the lady herself. It chanced that this friend, who was a frequenter of the courts, found himself one day in the company of a number of other lawyers, and, as they were discussing now this argument and now that, he laid before them, point by point, as a strange and marvellous adventure, the case aforesaid just as it had occurred, making believe, however, that the thing had been brought to pass in the kingdom of France. By chance the confidant of the lady, who, as has been already told, had been, her agent, and had been cognizant of the whole affair happened to be present when these words were spoken; whereupon he went forthwith to the lady, and, grieving sorely the while, made known to her what thing he had lately heard tell by the mouth of this friend of her lover.

When she heard these words she was stricken with sorrow beyond measure, and held it for certain that, if her lover should go on to act further in this wise, the secret of her hidden passion must needs be brought to light, and her honour and good name tarnished and destroyed. For this reason she resolved, once for all, that the first pleasure and the first boon which the young man had gotten from her should at the same time be the last; and this resolution she forthwith confirmed and settled in her own mind as unchangeable. The improvident youth, unwitting as to what had come to pass, and yearning exceedingly to turn his steps once more towards the pleasant uplands of that rich pasturage, waited for many a day in vain for a summons thither, as vainly as the Jews await that Messiah of theirs who will never come; and, as the days passed without letting him see any sign or token of the coming of the messenger, he learned too late that it was through the working of his own tongue that this evil had befallen him. As for the lady, although for a season she was sorely stricken with grief

over what had happened, we may be sure that she found out before long some safe and convenient method for satisfying her longings with some other lover.

MASUCCIO

I CAN well believe that the young man will be shrewdly blamed by some people, for the reason that he knew not how to maintain a prudent carriage, but if in truth we are minded to consider carefully what is necessary to the conservation of true friendship, no one can with justice condemn him; for the reason that we must set down as greatly wanting in the spirit of humanity, that man who is not wont to discover every weighty secret of his to any trusty friend. And this he is especially bound to do when it may concern not only his wealth and his happiness, but even his very life, because no pleasure can be rightly enjoyed save we share the same with some well-trusted companion. Therefore, seeing that the young man put his trust in such a friend as this—what though he afterwards fared ill through the man's babbling—it cannot be denied that by his act he only followed the course in which he was constrained to go by the bonds of true friendship. So, as the result of the one merry night which he gave to the lady, he spent many months in very festive fashion, so long as the money which she had given him lasted. Now, putting on one side all farther argument as to this affair, it seems to me that a certain amount of praise is due from us to the gallant man on account of the high courage which he showed in suffering himself to be led in such fashion to the lady's house. But courage in sooth is innate in men and essential to them; but in my next story I will lay before you—and it is a wonderful tale I have to tell—an instance of the courage which was shown by a certain young woman, which would not have been deemed inadequate in a robust and stout-hearted man. Concerning this affair, judgment may be given when the story shall have been read.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-seventh

ARGUMENT

A CERTAIN GENTLEWOMAN, HAVING BEEN ABANDONED BY HER LOVER, DISGUISES HERSELF IN MAN'S GARB, AND GOES TO KILL HIM, BUT IS TAKEN BY THE CATCHPOLES OF THE COURT. BEING BROUGHT BEFORE THE PODESTA, SHE PERSUADES HIM TO LEND HER HIS AID IN WORKING OUT HER VENGEANCE, AND HE, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY BE WITNESS OF HER COURAGE, GOES WITH HER, AND, HAVING REALIZED THE ROBUST SPIRIT THAT WAS IN HER, RESTORES THE PEACE BETWEEN HER AND HER LOVER. THEN, AFTER THE EXCHANGE OF HIGH COURTESIES, HE LEAVES THE TWO WITH THEIR FORMER LOVE RENEWED.

TO THE MOST EXCELLENT LADY, THE COUNTESS
OF BUCCHIANICO

EXORDIUM

MOST magnificent and excellent lady mine; seeing that long time has passed since I visited you, either in person or by letter, I feel myself continually stirred up, by reason of this failing of mine, to atone as best I may for the fault I have committed. Wherefore I send to you the accompanying extraordinary story, as to one whom I have always held to be extraordinary amongst women. This I pray you to accept, O most worthy countess, with affection of heart like that which I myself feel in offering it, so that by reading it you may understand how women, what though nature may in some respects have been niggard towards them, can show that they are endowed with courage equal to that of a man.

THE NARRATIVE

THE day before yesterday a story was narrated to my most serene lord the prince* as an undoubted fact, telling how there lately abode in Naples a young merchant of good and honourable family, gifted with seemly manners and adequately dowered with all the goods which fortune now gives and now takes away. This young man for a long time reaped the greatest happiness in the enjoyment of the love of a gracious and beautiful young girl, who loved him and him only in return for the ardent passion he had for her; wherefore these two, each being possessed by like desire, accounted themselves blessed beyond measure in the gratification of their loves. But because those things which we are allowed to possess undisturbed and in great abundance usually pall upon our appetites after a time, it happened that the young man was taken with the desire to go a-hunting fresh game. For this reason, or for some other, without making any further sign to her who had hitherto enjoyed his love, he began to withdraw himself from her presence, and neither to go nor to send word to her, small or great; on account of which thing the lady, astonished at this strange conduct, despatched messages to him again and again to bid him either come or let her know the reason of his displeasure. But to all these inquiries of hers she could get no reply, good or bad. Furthermore, she made diligent examination of herself without being able to find that she had been guilty of any deed calculated to kindle anger or resentment against her. Wherefore she deemed for certain that the cause of this misfortune could be nothing else than some new love. And in order to have good assurance of this, she sent divers men to spy upon his traces, and these before they had searched many days found out that the lady had judged aright, forasmuch as her lover had indeed become enamoured of another damsel, upon whom he lavished all his affection: On this account the lady, when she knew for certain that this thing had come to pass, fell a-weeping bitterly, and

* Roberto di Sanseverino.

was soon brought into so cruel a state of grief that she was like to pine away; and, chafing with anger and indignation, she felt her great love change into the most malignant hatred, to such a degree that if by chance she should have held between her teeth the heart of her faithless lover she would willingly have torn and devoured the same. Moreover, being assailed and overcome by the strength of her passion, she sought out within herself all possible means whereby she might compass his death, either by steel or by poison. But finding none of these convenient, she, with a fearlessness not to be looked for in a lady so young, determined to put an end to his life with her own hands; and, being well versed in all the particular features of the young man's house, how he always lay by himself in a certain chamber near to a little garden beside a terrace, and not much elevated above the level of the high road, and how at night, the better to let fresh air come into the chamber, it was his habit in the summer time to leave open the door which communicated with the terrace, she determined at all hazard to go thither alone, putting in peril both her life and her honour, in order to avenge herself, and with her own hands to slay her false and cruel lover.

Without in any way changing her plan she took a rope-ladder which her lover had left behind in her house, and, as she possessed due skill and knowledge of the art of grappling and climbing, she disguised herself as a man, and put on all the equipment necessary for such a nocturnal excursion, and when it seemed to her that the fitting time had come she sallied forth, taking with her a poisoned knife. As she went on her quest, following the cross streets just as if she had been accustomed to such work from her earliest youth, she—either by her own evil fortune or by the good fortune of her lover—happened to encounter the guard of the governor of the city as she was passing from one street to another. Then, judging at once who they must be, and perceiving she was cut off in such wise that no chance of escape was left for her, and that it would be useless to oppose her strength to theirs in defending herself, she straightway resolved to seize upon the least compromising alternative which lay before

her. So, turning towards the men who were about to lay hands upon her, she simulated as well as she could the voice of a man, and demanded of them to tell her where the governor was. Hereupon one of the guards made reply that he was close at hand, and him she answered in very courageous fashion, saying: "Let us go and find him at once, for I would fain speak with him on a matter of the highest moment." And while they were thus engaged it chanced that the governor himself came upon them; whereupon the young woman, going towards him, whispered to him that he should order his guards to withdraw themselves somewhat apart. As soon as he agreed to do this, she took him by the hand and addressed him in these terms: "Seeing that rumour has already let me know of the sincerity of your virtuous spirit, and how neither ambition nor disordinate appetite have ever prevailed to corrupt the same; how you, like a good knight, are ever ready to take in hand the righteous quarrel of an injured woman, I am moved to tell you that I am a woman, and young, and to entreat you without ceasing that you will not only suffer me now to go and carry out the project of vengeance upon which I am bound, but that you yourself, by virtue of your knighthood, will accompany me on my errand, and lend me your countenance in this matter in such fashion that I may unhindered give effect to my desire." After she had thus spoken she went on without reserve to tell him exactly everything which had passed between her lover and herself, ending by confessing to the governor the thing she was minded now to do.

After Ulzina,* the governor, had listened to this speech of hers he was greatly astonished, or even distraught with amazement, when he considered how stout was the heart of this girl, deeming that she could only have been stirred up to such passion by some grave injury. Now, although he already knew the young girl well, seeing that he had always judged her to surpass in beauty all the other damsels of Naples, and had given her all his love; neverthe-

* Some kinsman doubtless of Giovanni Olzina, the secretary of Alfonso the Magnanimous. See Porzio, "*Congiura dei Baroni*," Part I.



less, restrained by his great steadfastness of spirit that virtue inseparable from every true knight—and confirmed therein by the prayers and adjurations of the lady, he determined to conquer his selfishness and to drive away every froward thought, satisfying at the same time the damsel's wish and rescuing her lover from the disaster which threatened him.

When the governor remarked that she stood silent he endeavoured with many well-studied words to cause her to desist from her cruel purpose, but when he saw clearly that she was still firmly set in mind to do what she willed, and when she again requested him that, if he would not lend her his aid in this enterprise, he would at least throw no obstacle in her way, he made up his mind to go and be a witness of the final proof of the girl's skill and courage. So, having given orders to his guards that they should await his return, he took his way with her towards the lover's dwelling. When they were come to the foot of the terrace, she took a long pole and hoisted up therewith the grappling hook of iron to which the rope-ladder was attached, and having dexterously hooked the same on to the balcony she clambered up it as lightly as if she had been a cat. The governor, who found himself more and more amazed every moment, determined to see for himself what might be the issue of the affair; wherefore he too climbed up after her. When he saw her standing with the knife in her hand ready to carry out her savage design, and furthermore perceived how, on account of the heavy sleep in which her lover lay, she might easily accomplish her purpose, he had no wish to be witness of any farther proof of her intention; so, taking her by the hand, he spake thus: "My sister, I would never have believed, though it might have been told to me as something beyond doubt, that so great boldness and courage could dwell in a woman's heart, had I not seen this thing with my own eyes, and been made to understand clearly that you can only have been moved by righteous anger to inflict with your own hands a cruel death upon him whom you once held dearer than life. Nevertheless, since I am, as you must well know, the chastiser of malefactors in this city, I can find no honest or reasonable cause why I should

permit myself to be made the partaker of a homicide like this. Besides, I do not doubt, after having found you engaged in such a work as this, and seen how your mind was fully made up to take the life of this sleeping man with your impious and cruel hand, that you must know perfectly well that, by every righteous judgment, you deserve yourself to be mulcted of your own life. Although I might with justice award such a doom to you, I have spared your life out of kindly consideration, and it is only becoming and seemly that they who obtain pardon should likewise grant pardon. Wherefore I beseech you be not a niggard in this respect, but, by way of recompense for the great boon you have received at my hands, grant to me the life of your lover; which life, as you have already confessed to me, you once held dearer than your own. I, forsooth, will not depart from this place until I shall have set this matter in order in such fashion that hereafter your loves shall never again be severed save only by death itself."

The young woman, although she could not for a time put aside the fury which possessed her, saw clearly in the end that she could do nothing, and when she turned to the other side of the question she found no little consolation in the good counsel given by the governor, who might, in very sooth, have taken from her her life, or at least her honour. Wherefore she seemed much appeased by what he said, and the governor, having gone into the chamber where the young man was sleeping unsuspecting of ill, took hold of him by the hair and awakened him. The young man, filled with no little fear and amazement, was brought back to his waking senses by this strange occurrence; whereupon the governor straightway commanded him to light a candle, which thing he quickly did, shaking the while with terror. And after the lady had let him know and had related to him the cause which had brought them thither, and with a torrent of befitting words had reproved his foolish doings, the governor bade him that he should, with the strap round his neck,* beg pardon of her, and from henceforth hold his life as a gift from her, promising at the same time

* Orig., *con la corregia la gola*.

that as long as life should be granted to him he would be her sole and faithful lover. And he, being convinced of his offence, straightway did all that the governor commanded him, and rendered him due thanks for all the great service and kindness that had been wrought on his behalf. Then, in obedience to the wishes of the governor, and of the lady herself, he put on his clothes, and they all together honourably escorted the gentlewoman as far as her home.

When the lady was come to her house she turned to the governor and thanked him in very graceful speech, declaring that she was quite ready to put herself under his charge, both as to her person and her goods, as to a perfect friend and good brother, recommending not only her life but also her honour to his keeping. Then, with divers other very sweet speeches, she bade him farewell. Her lover remained with her, the cruel strife between them having been transformed into soft and joyful peace; and, going back to their former love without ever recalling aught of past mischance, they reaped in bliss the full enjoyment of their love as long as they both lived.

MASUCCIO

IN truth the boldness of this love-possessed damsel may be accounted as nothing less than miraculous. (It is not for me to say whether the cause thereof may have been overpowering love or unbridled lust.) And because the virtue of the governor in the course he followed was so eminent, that any words of praise I may use thereanent must appear scanty, forasmuch as the methods he employed sprang from his natural goodness, without having been occasioned or suggested by anyone else, I will now exhibit to you an example of robust courage on the part of a certain Moorish serving-woman, which was called forth by virtue, and by her tender care for the honour of her dear master—courage which would have honoured the estate not only of a mean servant, but even that of any high-hearted man.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH NOVEL.

Novel the Twenty-eighth

ARGUMENT

A KNIGHT OF PROvence IS OVERGONE WITH LOVE FOR HIS WIFE, WHO BEING ATTACKED BY AN ACCESS OF LUST INDULGES HERSELF WITH A DWARF. A MOORISH SERVING-WOMAN KILLS THEM BOTH IN THE VERY ACT WITH A LANCE, WHEREUPON THE HUSBAND CAUSES THEIR BODIES TO BE CAST OUT AS FOOD FOR WILD BEASTS.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS DON FRANCESCO
OF ARAGON*

EXORDIUM

MY most illustrious lord, although you have not passed out of your adolescence into the full flower of your age, I, being well assured that your high ability will prove fully adequate, not merely to gather the meaning of my own unpolished writings in the mother-tongue, but also to deliver excellent and finished judgment concerning the flowery and graceful discourse of others, will not refrain from sending to you the novel which follows, so that you may have due notice and warning of the evil practices of that misbegotten brood of womankind, and in the course of time, with the prudence which you now exhibit, may acquire both the power and the knowledge to protect yourself from their snares and their treachery. Farewell!

* He was the fourth son of King Ferdinand. He was born in 1461, and was consequently not more than fifteen years of age when Masuccio dedicated to him this novel. That such a story should have been inscribed to a boy is a valuable index of the manners of the period.

THE NARRATIVE

IN the noble city of Marseilles, no very long time after the destruction by fire dealt out to it by that godlike prince, King Alfonso of Aragon of happy memory,* there lived a certain doughty knight, rich, and illustrious for his virtues, youthful, and very seemly in his person, who was called by name Messer Piero d'Orliens. He, being consumed by an ardent passion for a maiden of exceeding great beauty named Ambrosia, the daughter of a powerful baron and a countryman of his own, and having succeeded by the instrumentality of some good friends of his in transforming this passion of love into lawful matrimony, brought home to his own house Madonna Ambrosia with stately ceremonies, and sumptuous feasts. Then, having arrayed her in magnificent garments, and found that she was beautiful beyond measure, and that her manners and her carriage gave him exceeding great delight, his love for her grew a thousandfold greater than heretofore. So powerfully indeed was his inclination swayed in this particular, that he felt, whenever he might be deprived of the company of his beloved Ambrosia, that all his contentment and delight was straightway transformed into sorrow.

But although Ambrosia was furnished by her husband with a great store of rich and precious gems, and of other ornaments, more ample, indeed, than her needs demanded; although, whenever she might go abroad, she was attended by a numerous train of servants both male and female; nevertheless her husband did not show himself over-ready in furnishing that particular service which is especially to the taste of fair dames like herself, and which I will not for the sake of modesty further treat of in this place. Thus the lady passed her days blessed by fortune, without ever having need of aught that money could buy, either small or great. Amongst the troop of servants maintained in the house, it chanced

* Marseilles was attacked and partially burnt by Alfonso the Magnanimous in the course of his wars with Joanna II.

that the knight aforesaid kept for his especial amusement a certain dwarf, so horrible and deformed in his outward seeming that he was hardly to be likened to anything human. Now of this dwarf Madonna Ambrosia was wont to be mightily diverted, and from time to time she and the others of the household would make him skip about, and, for their diversion, put himself in divers and antic postures, as is the way of dwarfs and creatures of this sort, whereby they were all filled with delight and merriment.

In the course of this sport with the dwarf, it came to pass that the lady became possessed with the idea that, misshapen monster as he was, there was something about him which would make him well fitted for the purpose she had in view; and, on this account Ambrosia albeit she had for a husband so excellent and proper a gentleman, one who loved her more than he loved himself, who was endowed with all those other excellent qualities aforementioned, and who gave her such kindly and generous usage, was seized with the notion that two would serve more efficiently than one to appease and to weary out the insatiable lust which possessed her, and was overborne by an ardent and unbridled desire to make a trial whether the dwarf might not be able and willing to dance as nimbly for the satisfaction of her longings as he had danced upon the hard floor. And giving way to these wanton imaginings she fretted amain.

Now because it happens but seldom that women of this execrable breed ever take such thoughts into their heads without finding soon some occasion and commodity for putting the same into execution, this vile strumpet did not let pass more than a few hours before she was minded to glut the greedy maw of her lust with this provender almost too horrible to name. However, the savage beast within her caused her grave annoy; and she, being driven on continually by her unbridled passion, let her thoughts run only towards the encounter with the dwarf in more ardent wise with every day that passed.

Thus, while she let her humour continue in this strain of detestable lechery, it came to pass that an old Moorish woman-servant, one who had for a long time lived in the

service of the father of the cavalier in question, and afterwards with the cavalier himself, holding the house in great affection, began to harbour suspicions of the lady. To her in sooth any injury which might befall either the honour or the happiness of her master would have been a greater sorrow than the loss of her own life; wherefore she made up her mind, should this suspicion of hers prove to be true, to die sooner than endure the evil thereof; but, as became a woman of age and experience, she wished to be well assured of the matter before disclosing it to her master. One day, when the knight had gone out of the city to take his pleasure in flying his hawks, the old woman, deeming that the lady with such a fair opportunity as this before her would not fail to make a fresh trial of her fine game, concealed herself beneath the bed in Madonna Ambrosia's chamber, and as she waited there she heard her mistress in artful wise give leave to all the servants of the house to go where they list, and then she beheld her come into the chamber accompanied only by the dwarf. After the door had been made fast, the old woman was conscious that they got upon the bed at once, perchance so as to waste no time over farther parley, and forthwith began to play their wicked game. Then the Moorish woman, having come out from her lurking-place, and seen clearly with what outrageous and unrestrained lechery the abandoned wanton bore herself towards the hideous toad whom she had chosen as her minion, felt herself at the same time stricken with grief and inflamed with rage in wellnigh intolerable measure. Wherefore, without taking further thought or consideration anent the thing she saw, she turned her eyes towards a corner of the room, and, espying there a wild-boar spear, finished at the point with a sharp and heavy blade, which the knight was wont to use when he went a-hunting, she seized this in her hand; and, having got upon the bed without being seen by either of them, she struck the lance through the woman's reins with the full force of her rage, and, throwing all her weight upon it, she transfixed not only Madonna Ambrosia, but the dwarf as well, even down to the sheets of the bed. Thereupon the two wretches, being unable to

free themselves from the lance, in a very brief time breathed their last entangled in one another's embraces.

The Moorish woman as soon as the deed was done fell into a cooler mood, and began to doubt whether she had done well in avenging this wrong which did not concern herself. Nevertheless, having made fast the door of the chamber without moving the dead bodies from where they lay, she sent straightway a servant to fetch home the knight, and to tell him that if he wished to see his wife still alive it behoved him to come quickly, for the reason that she was like to die on account of a certain spasm of the heart which had suddenly come over her. The servant, having found the cavalier, delivered to him the message, to which he listened with no little sorrow. He at once gave over the chase and took the road back to his home with all speed; and, when he drew near, was met by the devoted and faithful Moorish woman, who, after she had conducted him into the house, took him without a word into the chamber, and there let him see the horrible work in which that wife of his, whom he held dearer than aught beside, had been engaged, and with the most overpowering grief, told him word by word, in what fashion the thing had come to this issue, and how she herself, stirred up by her exceeding great jealousy of his honour, had thus let herself outstep the bounds of her duty and commit this double homicide:

My pen, in sooth, is all inadequate to set down how great and how bitter were the inward anguish of the gentleman, and his travail and desolation of soul when he saw the deed which had been done—a deed of which the speech of his faithful servant had borne him true testimony—and realized how he had lost at one stroke his honour and his future peace of mind, together with his wife, so beautiful, and held by him in such supreme love. Each reader who has still his wits about him will be able to estimate this for himself. For it seemed to him as if his agonized heart were reft in many pieces: After he had let his grief moderate somewhat through much weeping and lamentation, he came to himself once more, and, seeing that the ill which had befallen him was one for which there was no cure, he set about taking

counsel how he might as a prudent man best retrieve his honour. So, having sent straightway to fetch the father and the brothers of Madonna Ambrosia, he caused them to enter the chamber. Then, after he had let them know what had been the sin and what the punishment of these two lovers, he declared that he himself, overcome by anguish and burning indignation, had been the slayer of these wretches and the punisher of this horrible and wellnigh inhuman offence.

Thereupon the lady's kinsfolk, when they perceived and were convinced by reason in what wise the matter stood, could think of naught else to do than to commend highly the cavalier for what he had done; and he, on his part, to let the world know how severe and unflinching was the punishment of revenge which he was minded to inflict, forthwith bade them take the two dead bodies, transfix with the lance just as they were, and place them upon the back of an ass and carry them to the top of a certain hill outside the city. There they were thrown down as food for birds and wild beasts, and in a short time naught was left of them but their naked bones:

MASUCCIO

IT would be hard to give praise enough to the old Moorish woman for that, with her affectionate love, she did her part in saving from ruin and downfall the injured honour of her beloved master, and in avenging the outrage which had been put upon him. It would be just as hard to heap adequate condemnation upon the young lady who was a Christian, seeing that by such a vile deed she blackened her own fair fame and the honour of many others who were her kinsfolk. Still, for the reason that she was punished for all the guilty pleasure she had enjoyed by one single and well-deserved stroke, I do not feel that it is my part to upbraid her more. Thus, taking my way back to the delightful shores of our Parthenope, where the pastime of jousting is much affected after divers fashions, and where people are always en-

gaging in tourneys with marvellous vigour, I will tell you the story of another woman, who, albeit she was well approved in the jousts, was in this case more keen for sport than happy in her adventure, seeing that she was minded to run not one, but three valiant courses in a single night.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH NOVEL.

.

Novel the Twenty-ninth

ARGUMENT

VIOLA MAKES PROMISE OF HER FAVOURS TO THREE LOVERS IN THE SAME NIGHT. THE FIRST GOES TO HER, BUT HE IS KEPT FROM THE ENJOYMENT OF HIS BOOTY BY THE COMING OF THE SECOND. THEN THE THIRD ARRIVES AND IS TRICKED BY THE SECOND, AND ENTRANCE IS DENIED TO HIM; BUT HE DISCOVERS THE CHEAT, AND SEES WHAT IS BEING DONE. WHEREUPON HE BRINGS CRAFT TO HIS AID, AND TAKES VENGEANCE BOTH UPON THE ONE AND THE OTHER; THEN, BOTH OF THE OTHERS BEING PUT TO HEAVY LOSS AND INJURY, HE REMAINS IN SOLE OWNERSHIP OF THE PREY.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MESSER JACOMO AZZAIU-
OLO, A VERY NOBLE GENTLE-
MAN OF FLORENCE

EXORDIUM

MY work would indeed be most unfit and unsuitable for your acceptance, my magnificent and most virtuous Messer Jacomo, if I—knowing full well that you are gifted with a kindly and jovial temper—should, in writing this present novel for your pleasure, allow the same to show that it is in any way affected by dull or melancholy themes, either in its conception or in its ordering. I beg you, therefore, that you will accept it in a jocund mood, for I can tell you that you will of a surety find it made up from beginning to end of all manner of witty pleasantries, and set forth in such wise that it will not fail to rouse the loud and frequent laughter of yourself and of any others who may hear it told.

THE NARRATIVE

ONCE upon a time, which will be just a year ago when next January shall have passed, there lived in Naples a certain good fellow, a carpenter by trade, whose handicraft found no greater scope than the making of wooden shoes. He occupied a house by the side of the Sellaria,* in a little square at the back of the old Mint, and had to wife a very fair and graceful dame, who, although as a young woman she showed herself in no wise coy or averse from the courtings of everyone of the well-nigh countless swarm of her admirers, had nevertheless chosen from amongst this numerous company three whom she—and she was called Viola by name—especially favoured with her love. Of these one was a smith who lived hard by; another was a Genoese merchant, and the third was a friar; and, although I cannot now call to mind what his name was or what the colour of his frock, I well remember that he was a famous courser after such game. On a certain day it happened that, without showing one greater favour than the other, she gave her promise to all of these three, that whenever her husband might chance to be away all night from home, she would do for them what they so ardently desired.

It happened before many days had passed the husband found that he must needs go to Ponte a Selece† to bring back with him an ass-load of finished wooden shoes, in order that he might let polish the same in Naples, as was his wont; and, because on account of this business he would have perforce to remain there until the following day, his departure and his absence from home for the night soon become known to all three of the expectant wooers. Now, although each one of them had prepared himself for the meeting after his own fashion, nevertheless the first who appeared at the door of our Madonna Viola all ready for the fray was the Genoese, who was also perhaps the most ardent of the lovers. He besought her

* The saddlers' quarter.

† Probably Ponte a Sele, south of Salerno.

in most tender speech that at nightfall she would await his coming and give him a night's lodging and supper thereto, holding out to her the while the most lavish promises, as men are ever wont to do in similar cases: Indeed, he discoursed in such wise that Viola, so as not to keep him longer in suspense, assured him that she would do her best to content him, but that he must take good care to keep away until the night should be dark enough to prevent his coming from being seen by any of the people of the quarter who might be about. To this request of hers the Genoese answered gaily, "So be it, in God's name;" and, having taken his leave, he went forthwith to the Loggia, and once or twice to the Pandino, where he bought a couple of excellent capons, fat and white and big, which he sent privily to the young woman's house, together with some new bread and excellent wine of divers sorts.

The friar, after he had let celebrate his sacred office, felt himself mightily anxious that the promise which had been made to him should be duly kept; wherefore, making the ground fly from under his feet, and running through one street after another just as if he had been a greedy wolf falling upon some stray lamb which had wandered afar from the fold, he arrived in front of the house where Viola dwelt, and having called upon her aloud, he let her know that he was minded, come what might, to spend that night with her. Viola, being in no way disposed to break her faith with the Genoese, and knowing full well that she could not refuse to give to one so rash and importunate as this friar the satisfaction she had promised him, felt herself in a mighty turmoil of mind, and knew not what to do. Still, like a prudent young woman, she soon hit upon a plan by which she might settle matters in seemly and convenient fashion. Wherefore she gave the friar a pleasant answer, and told him that she would hold herself ready to do his will, but that he must on no account come to her before the fifth hour,* for the reason that she had abiding with her in the house a little cousin of hers who would not be fallen to sleep before that time, and that he should take himself off straightway, and God

* Eleven o'clock at night.

go with him, as soon as he should have appeased his appetite.

Thereupon the friar, seeing that reception would indeed be granted to him, agreed to do all that she asked him, and, caring for naught else, went his way. The smith, who had been busied until late at the custom-house, whither he had gone to attend to the withdrawal therefrom of certain iron, took his way back to his house, and as he passed along he espied Viola at the window, and said to her: "Now that your husband is away you can let me come to you, and it will be well for you if you do this, for be assured that I will mar the working of any other scheme of yours." Viola, who was mightily partial to the smith, and somewhat in awe of him to boot, now began to consider whether in the course of a long night she might not find plenty of time to let come and go all three of her customers. So, as she had provided accommodation for the first two, she determined to give reception also to the third, although he had come last; wherefore she addressed him thus: "My Mauro, you know well enough that I am looked at askance in this quarter, and that all the women—no doubt for some good and sufficient reason—seek to chase me hence, and every evening until midnight some one or other of them keeps a watch upon me; therefore, in order that no hurt may befall me from these traps of theirs, see that you delay your coming to me until the dawn, the hour when you are accustomed to rise. Then, if you will give me a signal, I will let you enter, and in this manner we may be together for a little space for our first meeting. In due time we will find for ourselves a more convenient method."

The smith, being well aware that Viola had plausible reason for what she said, and feeling sure that he would get everything he wanted, went away without another word, being well content to let the affair rest as it stood. As soon as night had fallen the Genoese stealthily made his way into Viola's house, and although he was met with a right jolly reception and got from her many kisses, nevertheless he was of such cold-blooded nature that he was unable to bring himself into the humour necessary for the occasion without the warmth of the bed and other

incitements, so he disposed himself according to his liking and tried his powers; the capons meantime taking a mighty long time to roast, either through the fire being low, or from some other cause. All this time the young woman was almost fainting with eagerness, fearing amain lest her second course should be set before her ere she had disposed of the first, and the third hour* had already struck before they had so much as made a beginning of their supper. While they were thus waiting there came a knocking at the door; whereupon the Genoese, horribly frightened, cried out, "It seems to me that someone knocks at the door here." The young woman answered: "Yes, what you say is right, and in good sooth I fear very much that it may be my brother; but be not afraid, for I will take care that he does not catch sight of you. Get out of this window, and sit down in the little window arbour which is outside. Meantime I will see who is there, and what he wants, and bid him go about his business."

The Genoese, who in sooth was vastly more overcome by fear than by the ardour of love, at once followed out Viola's directions, what though the wind was very cold, and there was falling a fine rain so chilling that most people would have taken it for snow. Thereupon Viola locked him out; and, making a guess as to who was the one who knocked, she carefully hid the supper, and when she had gone down to the outer door, and had assured herself that it was the importunate priest, she said to him in a tone somewhat troubled, "You have come very early, and have not observed the directions I gave you. Bad luck to me indeed that you should be minded to be the death of me, just because you could not be kept waiting a little time." And with these and other similar words she opened the door to the friar; and, he having come in, without even tarrying to make fast the door, gave her plenary absolution at once, not indeed by any authority committed to him by his superiors, but by the power of his own lusty nature. Whereupon Viola, thinking that he had by this time got enough to let him go away contented, as soon as she saw that he was making his way into the

* Nine o'clock in the evening.

house, closed the door and followed him up the stairs, saying to him, "Go away at once, for the love of God! for my young cousin is not yet asleep, and he will hear you of a surety." But the friar, paying no heed to what she said, went up the stairs, and finding the fire still burning, warmed himself a little, and then took hold of Viola once more, and began to attune his strings for a fresh spell of dancing, making thereby a melody vastly more pleasing than that which the poor devil of a Genoese played with his teeth, which chattered grievously by reason of the excessive cold. He, forsooth, could see everything which was being brought to pass within, by peeping through a fissure of the window, and how greatly he was tormented by grief at what he beheld, and by the fear of being discovered and by the cruel cold, everyone who likes to consider the question may decide for himself.

As he stood there he made up his mind over and over again to jump down from his post, but he was held back from this deed by his inability to judge of the height on account of the darkness, and by the hope that the friar, who in sooth had swallowed far more than his share of the sweet repast, would take his departure, seeing that Viola entreated him continually to be gone. But the friar, heated by the pleasurable touch of the beautiful young woman, would in no wise let her go out of his embrace, and went on to give to her a lesson in all sorts and kinds of dances which were in fashion, and he taught, not her alone, but also the Genoese, who looked on at the sport with mighty little pleasure. At last he made up his mind that he would not depart until he should be chased away by the dawning of the day. And thus they went on until the tenth hour * struck, and then the friar heard the blacksmith knocking at Viola's door and giving the sign which had been settled; whereupon he, turning towards the young woman, spoke thus, "Who is it who knocks at your door?" To this she made answer, "Oh! that is nothing but the constant trouble I have to put up with from the smith my neighbour, a fellow I have not been able to beat off either by fair words or foul." The

* Four o'clock a. m.

friar, who was gifted with a merry humour of his own, forthwith began to cast about in his mind how he might devise some new sport or other; then he went quickly down to the door, and, speaking in a soft voice, and feigning to be Viola, he said, "Who art thou?" Then the smith replied, "It is I; do you not know me?—open quickly the door, I beg you, for I am getting wet to the skin with the rain." Then said the friar, still in a simulated voice, "Alas, woe is me, that I cannot open the door! for whenever I move it, it makes so much noise that, were I to open it now, some scandal or other would surely arise thereanent." Then the smith, knowing not where to bestow himself in order to escape the rain, called out to Viola to open the door to him straightway, inasmuch as he was dying of love for her.

The friar, who was mightily pleased at keeping the smith waiting outside so that he might get wet through, now said, "Dear soul of mine, give me just one kiss through this opening of the door, which methinks is wide enough, and then I will see whether I cannot move this accursed door without letting it make much noise." The smith took all these words for truth, and, overjoyed at his good fortune, at once disposed himself to kiss his beloved Viola; but in the meantime the friar had taken off his breeches, and now he thrust his hinder part close to the opening of the door. The smith, who thought he was about to take a kiss from the sweet lips of his Viola, was forthwith made aware, both by the touch and the odour, what thing it was he was in truth kissing, and came to the conclusion that this must be some other huntsman, who had showed himself the keener after the game, and had both robbed him of his anticipated delight and put this shameful trick upon him. So he determined at once not to suffer this insult to go unavenged, and, feigning still to be caressing his love, he said, "My Viola, while you are busying yourself in opening the door, I will go fetch a cloak from my house, for I can no longer endure this rain." To this the friar replied, "Go, in God's name, and come back as soon as possible." And when he had said this, he and Viola fell to laughing so heartily that they found it hard work to stand upright on their feet.

Meantime the smith went back to his shop and quickly got ready a rod of iron in the form of a spit, which he straightway heated red-hot in the fire, saying to his apprentice the while, "Now, take good heed of what I say, and, as soon as I shall spit, come to me as softly as you can, and bring me this rod." Having thus spoken he went back to Viola's house to let speed his plan for gaining entrance thereinto; and, passing on from one word to another, he said at last, "Kiss me once more." Whereupon the friar, who was as expert as a monkey in making such a change of front as was here called for, again put before the smith the same object to kiss. Then Mauro gave the signal to his apprentice, who at once handed to him the red-hot iron rod, which he took in his hand, and, watching his time, dealt the friar a prick with the same in his backside with such good will that it went into his flesh wellnigh a palm's breadth. The friar, when he felt the cruel pain of this, uttered perforce a howl loud enough to touch the heavens, and went on bellowing amain as if he had been a wounded bull.* All the neighbours round about, having been aroused from sleep, flocked to the windows with lights in their hands, and each one demanded to know what might be the cause of this strange uproar. The wretched Genoese, who was so benumbed with cold that a very little more would have turned him into an icicle and made an end of his life, when he heard all this clamour, and saw that lights were coming from all parts, and that the day was about to break, took heart at last and resolved to leap down from where he stood, in order that he might not be discovered standing there in shameful concealment as if he were a thief. So, recommending himself to God, he dared to do this thing. And fortune so dealt with him that, as he came to the ground, he happened to alight upon a stone, which he struck with his foot, and fell over the same in such manner that he broke one of his legs in two places. Being stricken with a pain no less cruel than that which the friar suffered, he likewise shouted his woes aloud.

The smith, hearing the noise, ran forward at once, and;

* The text of 1510 gives *fiero*, but Settembrini's emendation *ferito* seems the better sense.

when he came upon the Genoese and recognized him, and likewise perceived the cause which made him cry out in such fashion, felt somewhat of pity for him, and contrived by the aid of his apprentice to convey him within the smithy, although the task was by no means an easy one. After the smith had heard from the injured man in what manner the whole affair had come about, and the name of the friar, he rushed into the street at once and managed to silence the huge uproar which the neighbours were still making, saying that the cries had arisen from two of his apprentices who had wounded one another in a quarrel. And when everything was once more quiet, Viola, according to the wish of the friar, called softly to the smith to come; and he, having entered the house and found the wretched friar half dead, debated in his mind many and various plans for the ending of the affair. At last he and his apprentice took the friar on their shoulders and carried him to his monastery; and then, having returned, they set the Genoese upon the back of an ass and conveyed him to his lodging. As to the smith, he took his way back to the house of Viola, it being now broad daylight, and after feasting together with her off the capons, and over and beyond this attaining the full enjoyment he desired, he went back in high delight to wield his hammer. And in this wise Maestro Mauro, what though he was the last of the competitors, left the other two to suffer no slight disgrace and injury and pain.

MASUCCIO

OF a surety we may with justice praise our Viola for her care and foresight, in that she contrived in such becoming manner to give a reception to all three of her lovers on the same night. And although two of these had perforce to be accompanied back to the homes from which they had set forth, having received no slight guerdon of ill in the meantime, nevertheless Viola, fortified by the plenary absolution which the reverend friar more than once gave her during his stay, was still on the spot to teach to the worthy smith that novel fashion of dancing

which the Genoese had already learnt by watching, albeit with small pleasure. Now, leaving Viola in Maestro Mauro's company to enjoy the repast which had been prepared, we will sail into deeper water, and will describe in the next novel the very artful working and the strange devices employed by a certain young gentlewoman, who, on account of some defect in her nature, was altogether wanting in bashfulness and chastity; and how she, so as not to be overlooked by careless Fortune, and thereby to lose some portion of her flowering youth, elected to become her own messenger, thus carrying into effect with greater expedition the enterprise she had so greatly at heart.

THE END OF THE TWENTY-NINTH NOVEL

Novel the Thirtieth

ARGUMENT

A YOUNG LADY BEING ENAMOURED OF THE PRINCE OF SALERNO SENDS FOR ONE OF HIS CHAPLAINS AND DECLARES TO HIM THAT SHE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE SAID PRINCE NUMEROUS LETTERS PRAYING FOR HER LOVE. THE CHAPLAIN, HAVING DIVINED HER MOTIVE, ENTERS INTO A PLOT WITH HER AND BRINGS THE AFFAIR TO THE ISSUE DESIRED.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, GERONIMO
DE SANSEVERINO, PRINCE OF
BISIGNANO*

EXORDIUM

NO less out of gratitude for the many benefits which I have received at your hands, most serene prince, than because I know you are wishful, not to say eager, to test by your own experience one of my frolicsome novels, I feel myself induced, or even constrained, to send you the one I have in hand, and to include it in the collection of the others. Deign then, most gracious prince, to accept it—in sooth the most humble of gifts—with gladsome face and with benignant favour, in order that, having read the same together with the others, and having learnt that your most worshipful name is held up to lasting remembrance therein, you may give reward to the maker thereof by placing him and writing him down amongst the number of your humble servant: Farewell.

* He was Grand Chamberlain, and the leader of the Revolt of the Barons. He was executed in 1487.

THE NARRATIVE

AT that time when our most glorious lord and king, Don Fernando, was entertaining Naples, according to his constant use, with those joustings, those marvellous hunting parties, and those sumptuous festivals which were famed far and wide, it chanced that amongst the other merry-makers was a certain young damsel, of beauty almost unrivalled, and a scion of one of the noblest houses of our Parthenopean city. Now for some time past she had often let her eyes regale themselves with the beauty and the grace of form belonging to my most illustrious lord, the Prince of Salerno, and beyond this had heard sung, over and over again, the praises of his extraordinary worth. By this time she was more than ever captivated by him, wherefore she became so lovesick that she could only give thought to the gentleman by whom her fancy had been ensnared.

After she had let her thoughts—which, in sooth, were in no slight travail and confusion—engage themselves in many and divers plans by which she might honourably achieve the victory in so worthy an adventure, she found that all these schemes were over-difficult to compass; wherefore it more than once came into her head that she would follow the advice of certain other ladies of her acquaintance, who, whenever they found they could not refrain from entering the lists of love, were wont to send word to the gallant youths beloved of them and challenge them to the amorous warfare. But this damsel, who was gifted with no small prudence, and was persuaded at the same time that she would not, by following such a course, be setting a very high value either upon herself or upon her undertaking, suddenly determined that she would make trial of a novel and very crafty stratagem to induce the prince aforesaid to cull the first fruits of her virgin garden. Having chosen a time when the prince had gone to other parts for diversion in the chase, she let come to her a certain priest, a man whom she could fully trust, and one who was much about the house, and to him she gave directions as to what she would have him do.

In consequence of this the priest went the very next

morning to the wonderful palace which the prince aforesaid had built for himself in the Porta Reale,* where he found a certain Fra Paulo, the chaplain and most trusted attendant of the prince. Having inquired in becoming fashion whether he was speaking to Fra Paulo, the chaplain replied that he was, saying, "I am that man." Then the other went on to say: "A noble lady I know of would fain have speech with you to-morrow morning early in such and such a church." To this the friar answered with a smiling face that he would not fail to be there according to the lady's commands, and when the appointed time had come he went thither much pleased with his task. He found the gentlewoman awaiting his coming, and she, having left for the nonce her attendant, drew aside together with the friar into a chapel, and began to speak to him in this wise: "My good Fra Paulo, inasmuch as you are reputed to be a man of great prudence, and one enjoying the intimate confidence of your lord and master, it seems to me that I shall not be trespassing beyond the bounds of reason in assuming that I may, for the safeguarding of his honour and my own, and likewise for the reassuring of my mind, lay bare to you entirely my secret affairs, as if you were my spiritual director. And, before I go on any further in this matter, I desire to hear from you—and I conjure you by the love and the fidelity which you entertain towards your lord and master that you will be truthful with me in this respect—whether you can say truly that certain letters, which I intend later on to show to you, are in the handwriting of your lord the prince. I speak to you thus for the reason that for some time past a certain young man, whom we keep in our house as the tutor of my brothers, has conveyed to me many and divers letters purporting to come from the lord prince—letters more impassioned and tempered with love than were ever before written by fervent lover to his lady. Moreover, they are all brought to an end with the request that I should agree with him as to the time and place fitted for the purpose in view. Now

* In the Largo Santa Trinita. In 1584 the palace was converted into a Jesuit church. See Porzio, "Congiura dei Baroni," p. 39.

on this account my mind has been sorely troubled, no less by this messenger than by the errand he has undertaken, so that I can get no rest, and am nearly brought to despair of my life. Over and beyond this, I have been assailed by the suspicion that this said young man may have been bribed by some one of my elder brothers by way of putting my constancy to the proof. I am the more inclined to this belief from the fact that one day, when I was holding discourse with my brothers and with divers other members of our household, concerning the valour and excellencies of some of our chief nobles, one put forward this gentleman as supreme, and another that. Whereupon I, stirred thereto by the spirit of truth, and likewise by the love which I bear the prince, and by no other motive, grew heated in the argument, and declared that your prince was not only the glory of the court but likewise the light and the mirror of this our Italian land. When he heard me utter these words one of my brothers, turning towards me, commanded me straightway to hold my peace, and from that day to this he has never looked kindly upon me. For this reason I rack my brain in debating this affair in such wise that I can scarcely eat or sleep at all. Then, on the other hand, I sometimes say to myself, 'Can it possibly be that my brother really speaks the truth, and that the prince is in sooth taken with love of me, seeing that I have at times kept my eyes fixed upon him somewhat more than was due, and has on this account been led to write to me in so passionate a strain?' And if things should come to this issue, although it would be a less matter of peril to me, I should nevertheless be cut to the heart therefor; for the reason that I desire especially that he should bear himself according to the usages of noble gentlemen, and that his love should be of a nature like to mine own passion, which in sooth, I have moderated in such wise that it does not transgress the limits which an honest woman is bound to observe, because I have not suffered myself to be so much carried away as to forget that my fair fame should be set before all gratification of sensual passion."

With these, and with other words of a like character, which had been prepared with the most consummate art,

she laid before the chaplain the letters aforesaid, by way of giving him still farther assurance of the truth of her craftily devised discourse. Fra Paulo, although, as a prudent man, and as one accustomed to bring contests of this sort to a victorious issue, he had fully detected and comprehended the hidden wishes and purpose of the young lady, nevertheless, as she went on step by step with her reasonings and arguments, was astonished at finding so great ingenuity and astuteness in the brain of a damsel so delicate and youthful. Still, as he remarked more than once that, whenever she mentioned the name of his lord the prince, her face changed colour, he understood that the passion which possessed her must be indeed burning and fierce. Wherefore he determined to let this same wind speed his own bark over such a pleasant sea, and he thus made answer to her: "Lady mine, because of your kindness, you have thought well enough of me to unveil to me your secret affairs, you may rest assured that, no less for the preservation of your own good name than for the safeguarding of my lord's, I will deal with this matter with all that silence and secrecy which, according to your judgment and mine as well, the gravity and importance of the same demands. Your doubts, which have their foundation in the most valid reasons, are worthy of praise rather than rebuke, and should not be put aside without the most careful consideration; still, what though it is not to be deemed impossible that your brothers may have thus laid a plot to bring about the end they fancied they foresaw, I cannot quite persuade myself that they, being prudent folk, would be minded to place their honour, after the fashion you have described in the hands of this young scholar belonging to a foreign people, seeing that they could easily have hit upon many other and safer methods of getting certain knowledge of this thing. But letting pass the truth or the falsehood thereof, as a thing at random, and reverting to our own case, I declare once for all that these letters were never written by my lord; in sooth, if they had been his handiwork I should have marvelled amain, because it is his custom never to write with his own hand to any woman, however fiercely his passion may be kindled for her, unless

he may first have made proof of her love: On this account, at the outset of all his love affairs the letters and messages thereanent are written and arranged by the agency of the chamberlain, who is in his closest confidence. Wherefore I hold it for certain that these same letters must be from the hands of this man, and besides this, it seems to me that I know somewhat of your scholar, and have seen him more than once occupied in private conversation with the chamberlain aforesaid. And it is not without good cause that I am led to entertain this belief; for many a time, when I have chanced to be discouraging concerning the beauty of women with my lord, he, with a little sigh, which he seemed fain to repress, has never ceased to place you before all other ladies. And although his words are rare and few and sententious, he has full often let me know secretly that you are the only one to whom he has entirely given his love. Therefore meseems that, although with your caution and foresight you do not need any counsel of mine, you should give me authority to act, so I may be able to place the whole matter, together with your own doubts and fears, before the notice of my lord. And this I would fain let ensue, not by means of letters or of messages, but by my own self, acting as your ambassador, for either to-morrow or the day following he ought to arrive in Salerno, and it will be in no wise irksome to me to go thither, to do a service to you and to my lord as well; and, when I shall have gathered the only true construction which can be drawn thereanent, I will come back with the best speed I can use. Supposing that I should find that the affair stands in such wise as it surely must, I can then take counsel with yourself as to what course it will be meet for you to follow, and to give such directions for the forwarding of the same as in your judgment may be the best. And in order that you may speedily be informed of the answer, and that the affair may be kept no long time in suspense, it will behove you to be on the watch for me, for when you shall see me pass by your house, and call to a certain boy who will be standing opposite thereto, you may be assured that I have done my errand, and on the following morning let us meet once more in this same spot."

The young lady, deeming that she had assuredly gulled the friar by her trick, and that her plot could not now fail to come to an issue perfectly satisfactory to her, was so greatly overjoyed that it seemed to her as if she had in sooth been crowned by Heaven. Wherefore, after the friar had brought his speech to an end, she said, "I beseech you that, as you have in a measure confirmed my doubting mind, you will furthermore assure me as to the rest; and that you will, as far as you can, disclose to me the words of your one and beloved lord, in order that my troubled spirit may repose itself somewhat." Then; having brought their discourse to an end, and each one being in a contented mood, though for a different cause; they went their several ways.

As Fortune willed it—and Fortune, be it said, ever showed herself far more favourable at the outset of the enterprises undertaken by this prince, than in letting them run on to a prosperous issue—the friar was met by the news that the prince had already taken the road with the intention of being in Naples on the following day. Wherefore Fra Paulo, having gone out to meet him, was mightily glad to let him know the whole history of the craft of the amorous damsel, and of the scheme which she had framed: The prince gave ear to the same with no less amazement than pleasure; for, albeit he had rarely cast his eyes upon this young girl, and retained no recollection of her beauty, nevertheless it seemed to him to be only just and right that he should hold dear those who loved him. So he made answer to the friar, and bade him set the business in progress in such wise that the meeting might be brought pass at the earliest possible time.

The friar, pleased beyond measure and eager to do service to the prince, betook himself towards the house of the damsel as soon as he had dismounted from his beast. Then, having made the sign which had been agreed between themselves—a sign which she observed and understood with the utmost pleasure—the damsel duly repaired on the following morning to the spot which had been chosen; and there, when she met the friar, he said to her, "My dear lord, who for your pleasure arrived last night in Naples, commends himself to you: I have set

before him at full length the purport of the converse betwixt you and me, but I could not draw from his lips any other reply except that he prays and conjures you, by the perfect love which he has for so long a time borne and still bears to you, and also by that love which you should dutifully entertain towards him, that it will please you, on this same evening, to give him a kindly audience in order that he may, without needing to confide in any living man, lay bare to you those matters which he has kept hitherto, and still keeps, secured by a strong lock within his passionate breast."

The young woman, who, as she listened to these words, was so vastly overjoyed that she could with difficulty contain herself within her skin, now felt that every hour would be as a thousand years until she should find herself engaged in the supreme conclusions of love; and, after a few feeble denials and hesitations, answered that she was ready to do what the prince desired. She did not quit the friar's company until they had, in discreet wise, settled when and in what manner and in what place she and the prince should come together for the amorous battle. The friar then betook himself straightway to his beloved lord and prince, who indeed was awaiting him and his answer. Then he set forth everything to the prince, who, when himseemed that the appointed time had come, went with his attendants to the meeting-place, and there he found the lovely young damsel, who, delicately arrayed and perfumed, received him with open arms, and with exceeding great delight. Then, after countless kisses had been given and received by the prince, they got on board their bark, and after the helm had been duly set and the sails spread to the wind, the damsel, what though she was as yet greatly versed in the mariner's art, let her lover navigate the sea of love during all the time they were able to spend together. When at last they found themselves with great delight once more in port, the damsel, tenderly clasping the neck of the prince with her arms, thus addressed him: "My sweetest lord, for that I alone, aided by my own skill and forethought, have succeeded in bringing you hither this first time I have but to thank myself, but for the future I must leave to the care of you

and of Love the devising of the means whereby you may be able to show me further proofs of your passion. Now there remains nothing more for me to say except that I recommend myself without ceasing to your favour." Thereupon the illustrious lord the prince heartened her with soft and tender words, and they then took leave of one another with great pleasure and delight; and if anyone should still wish to know whether, and in what fashion, this love of theirs bore further fruit, let him inquire on his own behalf.

MASUCCIO

I FOUND myself one day, not a great time ago, in a company of ladies, amongst whom there were some who were studying the book of the Master of the Sentences,* and when, as it happened, we began to discuss the miscreant wickedness, the innate malignities, the craft, and the depravity of womankind, all of which imperfections will be found in the novels lately written by me, they all of them fell upon me as if they had been so many bad bitches, reproaching me on the score of my writings, and affirming that men, who hold themselves to be, and indeed ought to be, more perfect in their way of life and in constancy than woman, continually let their sensuality get the victory over them, and plunge down into the abyss. In dealing with this subject, they came to me treating the same with such unclean and minute particulars that they far outstripped the speech of lascivious men, much more that of modest women. On this account Masuccio, who had not left his tongue in pawn with the Jews, after he had made clear the nature of his writing in a very flood of suitable and appropriate adjectives, which almost fell into verse, spake and said that men, even if they should descend to the commission of more detestable iniquities than women—a thing which was altogether beyond possibility—would still only work an offence against the laws and against their own honour, never essaying the wickedness of infecting and corrupt-

* Peter Lombard. See note to Novel XXIII.

ing the whole company of their kinsfolk—depriving them, not only of their present good name, but likewise blackening and obscuring the repute of such as these, and heaping this obloquy on the name and the memory of their descendants for ever and ever. Which profligate woman is minded to satisfy her headstrong and unbridled desire. And that this charge which I make is a true one, the laws will prove by open witness; inasmuch as these suffer any man who may discover his wife or his daughter in the sin of adultery to slay her forthwith, without being held liable to penalty; but we do not find any like privilege provided for women when they may find themselves in a similar case. And when the women aforesaid found that they had not a word to say by way of answer to my unassailable arguments, they behaved even worse than the brute beasts which in sooth they are. Nevertheless, although I have not in this Third Part spoken as much as is due, or as much as I could wish of the deeds of womankind, I must hasten on to reach the Fourth Part of my book. Wherefore I will give over the navigation of the gulfy main of their offences, and henceforth my story-telling, with the permission of Christ Jesus, my Redeemer, shall be of other themes, some of them sad, and some of a sort which may give you pleasure:

HERE ENDS THE THIRD PART

PART THE FOURTH

Prologue

THE THIRD PART OF THE NOVELLINO HAVING NOW COME TO AN END, THE FOURTH BEGINS. IN THIS WILL BE SET FORTH DIVERS THEMES; SOME MOURNFUL AND SAD, WHILE OTHERS WILL BE FOUND MERRY AND DIVERTING. FIRST WILL COME THE GENERAL EXORDIUM, AND THE STORY-TELLING WILL BEGIN WITH THE NOVEL CONCERNING THE LEPEERS.

MASUCCIO

ALTHOUGH when I made a beginning of this present little work of mine I determined to deal in this, the Fourth Part thereof, only with such matters as might be of a passionate and sorrowful nature, I have nevertheless made a change in the plan I laid down originally, having been moved thereto by just and seemly reasonings, and will now let certain novels of somewhat merry complexion accompany those which are sad. Thus, by mixing the tales of terror and misfortune with those which are jocund and facetious, I may bring it to pass that the grief, which any readers or listeners may feel over the novels of the sort first named, may end in merriment; thus employing the art of wise and prudent physicians, who, in cases where they administer remedies which are sharp and violent, afterwards are wont to correct the malignity of the same with drugs which run counter thereto. Now, without giving further thought to the matter, I will, for the reason aforesaid, let follow a series of ten novels, arranged in such wise that the one, when it comes to an end, will leave the company in tears and grief, which will need to be tempered by the merry humour and gaiety of the novel which will follow it.

Thus, in the name of God, and to the honour and glory

of a celebrated and illustrious lady to whom this first novel is dedicated, I will begin with the story of the Lepers, which, being of rare merit, is now sent by me to a lady of the rarest perfection. The subject of this novel, and the issue as well, are in sooth so violent and so cruel, that when I simply think of them—to say nothing of the writing of the same—I find myself able only with difficulty to keep back my tears. Still, without letting interfere aught of delay, I will give you a counterblast to your grief by telling you next a story which shall be pleasing and comely as to its subject, and, deviating in no wise from this course, I will, under the favour of Aries,* my celestial sign, continue in like succession until the end.

* Masuccio probably means that he was born under Aries, i. e., in the month of March.

Novel the Thirty-first

ARGUMENT

A COUPLE OF GRACIOUS LOVERS TAKE TO FLIGHT IN COMPANY, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY CHANGE THEIR PRESENT CONDITION TO THAT OF MARRIED FOLK; BUT, HAVING LOST THEIR WAY THROUGH THE COMING ON OF A SUD-DEN STORM, THEY LIGHT CASUALLY UPON A LEPER HOSPITAL. THERE, THE YOUNG MAN HAVING BEEN SLAIN BY THE LEPERS, THE GIRL OF HER OWN ACCORD KILLS HERSELF UPON HIS DEAD BODY.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS INFANTA DONNA
ELEONORA OF ARAGON *

EXORDIUM

IF, indeed, it be the bent of our nature to rejoice in pleasant and prosperous surroundings, made winsome with merry sporting and pleasures, and to be brought into benign and gracious mood through hearing tell of the same, it seems to me, most illustrious Madonna, that in like manner we must, whensoever we may hear or read of the unhappy mischances and horrible accidents happening to others, be constrained by our humanity to bear our part with them in their misery by according to them the tribute of our most bitter tears. Thus, seeing that a story of a very cruel mishap and lamentable misfortune which occurred to two most unhappy lovers ha. come to my notice (a story which tells how they were overtaken by evil fortune and led to suffer the penalty of a most cruel death), I have determined to give a special account of this sad and terrible accident to you, who, more than any other lady, are imbued with humanity and pitying love, in order that, through the

* Daughter of Ferdinand I. and wife of Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.

perusal of this story by yourself, through the hearing of the same by others, and through the compassion which will rise in your heart and the pitying tears which will fall from your eyes, some comfort may be given to the unhappy souls of these two young lovers, who, as I greatly fear, are being tormented in eternal fire. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

FAME, that most faithful disseminator of deeds wrought long ago, has revealed it to me how, at the time when Joan la Pucelle rose into notice in the kingdom of France, there lived in the city of Nanci, the chiefest and most noble amongst the cities of the duchy of Lorraine, two very generous and doughty knights. Each one of these was lord by a very ancient right of baronage of certain castles and villages lying round the aforesaid city, the one being called the Sieur de Condi and the other Messer Jannes de Bruscie. And even as fortune had granted to the Sieur de Condi one only daughter named Martina, a damsel well endowed with those especial virtues and praiseworthy manners which were befitting her tender years, and beautiful in person and in countenance, so also Messer Jannes was the father of one son, whose name was Lois, the only one surviving out of all those who had been born to him. Lois was about the same age as Martina, very comely in person, of noble heart, and abundantly furnished with every virtue. And although the relationship between the aforesaid families was somewhat distant, nevertheless, from the time of their remote ancestors, there had grown up by degrees so great a friendship and intimacy, that, putting aside the continual frequenting of one another's houses, it seemed as if they possessed their vassals and their goods in common, so hard would it have been to say where lay the dividing line between them.

Now it happened that when Lois had come to man's estate, he, through seeing Martina wellnigh every day and enjoying close intimacy with her, found himself to

be deeply enamoured of the damsel (who, in sooth, returned his love), without having aroused the notice or suspicion of anyone. So fiercely did the flame of love burn without and within, that these lovers knew not how to find any contentment save when they were together, discoursing and diverting themselves as they were led on to do by their passion and by the fresh bloom of their years.

In lovesome play like this they spent divers years of their youth in great happiness, without ever venturing to do any illicit deed; and, although each one of them desired above everything else to taste of that last and most keenly longed-for fruit of love, nevertheless Lois, who was endowed with the more sober temper of the two, resolved to keep clear of all reproach which might fall upon the young girl and her family, and determined in his mind never to have carnal knowledge of her except he should have the right thereof granted to him by lawful matrimony. Wherefore, having many times set clearly before his Martina this honest and resolute purpose of his, he found that she was fully in agreement therewith, and she gave him constant encouragement in his suit by counselling him to let this proposition for their union be brought to the notice of their parents by the means of some trusty person. Thus Lois, who desired the fulfillment of this matter beyond everything else in the world, called in the aid of his own father, who in most seemly wise made request concerning the same to the *Sieur de Condi*. But this gentleman, after he had altogether refused to entertain these proposals, giving divers good reasons for his decision, went on in a straightforward and temperate manner to let Messer Jannes know it was his pleasure that, in order to keep intact the honour of both houses, the intercourse between their children should henceforth be restrained in such degree that Lois should not enter his house except when called thither by the most urgent necessity. On this account, not only was all close intimacy in divers ways denied to the lovers, but even conversation as well. It would be a lengthy task, and a needless one, to set down here how many and how great were the amorous

plaints, and the bitter lamentations, and the secret and fervent sighs, of the two lovers when they understood what had been done. The trouble which weighed most heavily upon poor Lois arose chiefly from the fact that he now found himself the victim of cruel misfortune, although he had hitherto exercised such unblemished virtue, and he would often take counsel with himself and consider what was the nature of the bond which confined his soul within his wretched body. Nevertheless he did not give up the project of holding converse with his Martina by the means of letters, conveyed by a trusty messenger, and in these he besought her that, if she should be cognisant of any method by which they might compass their deliverance, she would straightway let him have intelligence thereof. Having written thus he sent the letter to her with the utmost care and discretion.

Now the young girl, borne down as she was by her intolerable grief, determined nevertheless to show how great her courage was, and as soon as she saw the messenger she took the letter from him, her face all wet with tears the while; and when she had read it, she found herself so much disturbed by the grief and trouble which oppressed her, that she could in no wise send a reply thereto in writing; wherefore she cried out to the one who had privily brought it to her: "I beseech you, who alone are cognisant of the secret and fiercely burning love there is between us two, to bear back my best greetings to him who has sent you to me, and tell him that either he shall be my husband and the one only lord of my life, or I will, by my own act, drive out my soul from this wretched body of mine by means of poison or the dagger. Tell him likewise that he, by that over-nice virtue of his, and by being more careful to guard the honour of my father's house than to enjoy the love which our youthful ardour urged us to gratify, has brought upon us, instead of the greatest joy, this most cruel separation, in which we are neither permitted to see one another or to converse together. Still, if he has the heart to come to this our castle, here beneath the window of my chamber, accompanied by certain of his

followers, and provided with a rope-ladder and everything else which may help me to descend to him, I will forthwith go to him; then we together will repair to the castle of some common kinsman of ours, and there make our covenant of marriage. When our deed shall be noised abroad, if by chance my father shall be content therewith, all will be well; but if not, the thing will at least be done, and it will behove him to act prudently and to change his refusal into a wiser and more liberal mood. If Lois should find himself inclined to do this thing, charge him to come hither to me this very night in the fashion I have described to you." The trusty servant, having given due hearing to this message, and having received from the maiden a certain signal to be used between Lois and herself, so that they might run no risk of mistake, departed from her straightway, and when he had returned to his master's house, related to him, point by point, all that he had done. Lois did not need much heartening to take in hand this enterprise, and with the utmost despatch laid under his orders some twenty lusty and courageous youths, chosen from out his servants and loyal vassals. When they had duly set in order everything which was necessary for the prosecution of their design, they set forth quietly and without any uproar at nightfall on their journey, which in sooth was not a very long one, and in course of a few hours Lois found himself, together with his companions, underneath the window which the young lady had described. Then, having given the signal agreed upon—a signal which was at once heard and understood by Martina, who was awaiting it with anxiety in her heart—he forthwith threw to her a strong cord to which he had affixed the rope-ladder. This she drew up, and having hooked the grappling irons securely on to the window's ledge, she climbed down by the ladder without fear, seeming to be one who might often have had experience in such practice. Lois forthwith gathered her into his arms, and, after numberless kisses, they went hand in hand to the highway. Then they mounted the lady upon an ambling palfrey which had been duly brought thither, and took to the road, follow-

ing a guide whose duty it was to lead them to the place they desired to reach. The servants, some in front and some behind, merrily accompanied them on their way.

But adverse Fortune, who must needs have set out their future in different wise, led them on to a sad and bitter end—an end more terrible, as I well believe, than had ever before been heard of—forasmuch as they had not gone a mile along the road when a storm of rain fell upon them, accompanied by such violent and baffling wind, such thick discharge of hail, and such awful thunder and lightning, that it seemed as if the universal firmament was about to fall down upon them. Around them the darkness was so dense and the tempest so violent that the greater part of the footmen—clad merely in their doublets—and the guide as well wandered out of the right path and took to flight, some in this direction and some in that, choosing whichever way seemed to offer the best chance of escape. And in like manner the two lovers themselves, the one clasping the other closely by the hand, could scarcely behold each other's faces, and were terrified and filled with dread lest this sudden manifestation of the powers of nature should prove to be a punishment sent by God on account of this forcible taking away of the damsel. Wherefore, knowing naught of the spot where they stood, nor whither they should direct their steps, hearing no sound of their companions, nor getting back any answer to the many and loud cries they uttered, they commended themselves to God, giving free rein to their horses, and committing to Heaven and to fortune the future disposition of their lives.

When they had wandered many a mile, now here, now there, as a ship labours through the sea when bereft of a steersman, they were at last lured on by pitiless death to suffer the supreme penalty; for, having espied from afar a faint light, and having for this reason let kindle a little hope, they guided the steps of their horses towards the spot where it was shining, without, alas! lessening aught the malignant purpose of fate. After faring onward for some time longer they arrived at the place where was burning the light which they had seen,

and knocked at the door of the house. When their summons had been answered and the door opened, they found that the place to which they had come was a hospital for lepers, and straightway certain disfigured wretches out of this ghastly band demanded of them, with little show of good disposition, what had brought them there at such an hour. The young people were both of them so much benumbed and enfeebled on account of what they had undergone that they could with difficulty utter a word; wherefore Lois made answer in as brief a fashion as possible that the long endurance of the storm and their own adverse fortune had brought them to this place, passing on next to beg them that, for the love of God, they would of their bounty suffer himself and the damsel to warm themselves at the fire, and give shelter to their weary horses. The lepers, although they might well be likened to the damned, as having no hope of salvation, and being destitute alike of humanity and all charity, nevertheless, moved by a sluggish compassion, helped the two lovers to dismount, and having stabled the horses with their own asses, led the wanderers into the kitchen, and made them sit down with the other lepers before a great fire. And although the young people felt no little loathing, for that they must needs foregather with this crew of blemished and infected wretches, yet, as there was no help for it, they endeavoured to be calm and show themselves contented.

Now in a short time the comforting virtue of the fire brought back to Lois and Martina their vanished comeliness, in such wise that it seemed as if they must have stolen the forms of Narcissus and Diana, and on this account it happened that a certain ribald miscreant amongst the lepers, a fellow who had been a mercenary in the late wars, and was now more foul and diseased than any of the others, was inflamed with an unbridled desire to have carnal knowledge of the lovely damsel; and being thus overcome by savage lust, he at once conceived the notion how, by slaying her young lover, he would win for himself the enjoyment of this precious prize. Therefore, without letting go for a moment the fell design he had formed, he took into his confidence a certain com-

rade of his, another as wicked and inhuman as himself, and these two went together to the stable. Then one of them let loose the horses, and, making a great clamour, called out: "Sir, come hither quickly and set your horses in order, so that they may not disturb our asses;" while the other, having taken in hand a heavy axe, hid himself behind the door and waited to work the nefarious murder he had planned. Ah, wretched Fortune! who art never content to let anyone subject to thy sway enjoy lasting happiness, with what deceitful hope didst thou lure these two innocent doves into the net where they were doomed to meet with such a cruel death! And even though it might not please thee that these two wretched lovers should have prosperous voyage over calm and tranquil seas, couldst thou not have found other methods innumerable to tear them asunder in their life or in their death? In sooth thou must have kept this fate in store for them as the most barbarous one possible. Certes, I can think of naught else to say concerning thy hateful deed than to declare that wretched indeed is the man who places his faith and hope in thee!

Lois, hearing himself thus summoned—although it was irksome to him to leave the warmth of the fire—went straightway with weary steps towards the stable in order that he might pacify the horses, leaving Martina in company of a number of the lepers, both male and female. He had scarcely entered the place when the savage ruffian dealt him such a blow on the head with the axe he wielded, that before he could even cry out "Alas!" he was felled to the ground a dead man. And although the wretch must have been well assured that his victim was dead, he still kept on dealing him further unmerciful blows about the head, and at last, leaving him lying there, the two went back to the place where the luckless girl had been left. Next these ruffians, being as it were the leaders of the company, gave command to all the others that they should straightway go to bed, each unto his own place, which thing was at once done. Thus the wretched Martina was left all alone; and, after she had many times demanded what had become of her Lois without getting any answer to the question, the

murderer at last came towards her, and spake thus with his coarse and failing voice: "My girl, you must have patience. We have just this minute made a dead man of your lover, wherefore you need no longer nourish any hope that he will help you; and, besides this, I am determined that as long as I shall live, I will take my pleasure of that fair body of yours." Oh, all you pitiful and weeping ladies, who have deigned so far to read or to listen to such tragic and unheard-of misfortune as I have to set forth in this sombre story of mine! have you husbands whom you love alone, or lovers for whom you burn with fierce passion? Oh, you youths, prompt to feel the amorous flame and now come to the full flower of your age! if love has ever fired the hearts of any of you with a like ardour, I implore you, if there abides in you aught of humanity, that you will let fall your saddest tears, while my pen—all unequal to the task though it be—goes on to write of the insupportable woe which fell at this moment on the unfortunate girl, of a surety more wretched than any other in all the world. Indeed, whenever the fancy seizes me to tell of her grief, there will at once rise up before me the fearsome forms of the lepers who pressed close round the unhappy girl, with their reddened eyes, and hairless brows, and inflamed noses, and festering cheeks, tinged with all the hues of corruption, and turned-up rotting lips, and hands foul, paralytic, and drawn—figures which, as we call them up to vision, may be likened to devils rather than to men, and which now sway my fancy so powerfully that my trembling hand can write thereanent no farther. All you, therefore, who listen with so much pity, imagine to yourselves what thoughts must have filled her brain, what she must have felt over and beyond the grief which oppressed her, when she found herself between these two savage hounds who were so fiercely inflamed with passion that each one seemed straining to be the first to work her ruin. She, now crying out aloud, and now beating her head against the walls several times, became as one half dead, and then came back to consciousness again, with her delicate face all scratched and covered with blood.

Knowing too well that there was now neither remedy nor help which could preserve her, she determined that, as she had in her lifetime gone fearlessly with Lois her lover, so she would now be with him, and follow him to the death. Wherefore, turning towards the two savage brutes, she said, "Oh, pitiless and inhuman as you are! by the one God there is, I now make supplication to you that, as you have bereft me of the sole treasure of my life, you will grant to me one last favour before you go on to work any other wickedness on me. This favour is that I may be permitted to behold the dead body of my unhappy lover, and to get what consolation I may by bathing his blood-stained face with my bitter tears." The ruffians, who in no way divined what scheme she had in her mind, were willing to satisfy her in this demand, and to show her some slight courtesy; so they led her to the spot where the ill-fated Lois was lying dead. She, as soon as she saw him, became as one mad and bereft of reason, and, uttering a cry which went up to heaven, and abandoning herself to grief, she threw herself upon her lover's corpse. And when she had in a manner satiated herself with weeping over him and covering him with kisses (although she had with her a small knife which would have served well enough to carry out her fell intent), she glanced at her lover's side, and her eyes fell upon his dagger, of which the ruffians had not despoiled him. So it came into her mind this would better serve her purpose, and furnish her with more prompt and expeditious means of accomplishing her design, and having secretly taken the same in her hand and concealed it between the body of her dead lover and herself, she cried out, "Before this blade, now all ready for my needs, shall enter my heart, I call upon thee, O gracious spirit of my lord, but a few short minutes ago violently torn from this maimed and tortured body here, and beg thee of thy forbearance to await my own, which will full soon gladly and willingly join itself to thee; so that, when our souls shall be burnt together in the same fiery blast, they may be conscious of close and complete union, bound by eternal love. And although in life we have not been granted the boon to enjoy, with these

our mortal bodies, our love together upon earth during the time allotted to us, and to give an example of perfect love, I pray that in eternity our spirits may be united, possessing one another and abiding together continually in whatever place our lot may be cast. Oh, body of my love, noblest and dearest! take to thine own, in sacrifice and in eternal union, this body of mine, which so eagerly hastens to follow thee wherever thou mayst go—my body which has been reserved, not for thy pleasure, but as a sacrifice on thy behalf. And may the funeral incense, such as is wont to be offered at the burial of the dead, be supplied by our blood, which will be mingled and brought to corruption in this vile spot, together with the tears of our cruel parents."

Thus she spake, and although the desire was upon her to spend more time in tears and lamentations, and although there entered her mind many other and pitiful thoughts to which she was fain to give utterance, she felt that the time had now come when she must carry out her last desire; wherefore she dexterously fixed the hilt of her lover's dagger on the breast of his dead body, and brought the sharp point of the same against the spot where her own heart lay. Then she crushed herself upon it without hesitation or fear of any sort, so that the cold steel passed through her while she cried out, "Now come, remorseless hounds as you are, and seize the prey which you were so hotly set to gain." Then, having once more pressed her dead lover in a close embrace, her soul took its flight from this wretched life.

Almost as soon as the two lepers heard these last words of hers they looked and saw that more than a span's length of the steel was standing out between her shoulders. And after this the lepers, being half dead with vexation and in grievous fear of their lives, quickly dug a deep grave in the stable, and without moving the bodies of the lovers buried them therein just as they lay.

Such, then, was the woeful and cruel end of this hapless pair, which thing I, grieving sorely the while, have here written down. After the waging of many fierce and deadly wars between their fathers, and after divers of each family had fallen victims to slaughter, it seemed

meet to the justice of God that vengeance should be dealt out on account of a crime so heinous as the one I have described, wherefore it let fall due punishment upon the two murderers. It chanced in the course of time that one of the lepers in the lazaret aforesaid stirred up a tumult amongst the others, and by means of this dissension all the facts of the murder were disclosed just as they had occurred. When this news came to the ears of the two nobles, the parents of Lois and Martina, they straightway agreed to send to make search in the leper hospital, and having excavated the ground where the grave was, they came upon the corpses of the gentle and ill-starred pair. Though they were now so greatly marred by corruption, the dagger which was there gave clear proof of their cruel and piteous death. After they had gathered the remains together out of the hateful spot where they had lain, and placed them in a coffin of wood, and borne the same out of the place, they set fire to the house both within and without, so that in a few hours all the inmates thereof were burnt to ashes, together with all their goods, and all the buildings and the church as well. Then they bore the dead bodies back to the city of Nanci amidst universal lamentation and weeping and display of mourning garments, not only on the part of the kinsfolk and friends, but of all strangers likewise, and with pious and solemn offices they buried them in one and the same tomb, upon which the following words were carven in remembrance of these two ill-fated ones: "Envious chance and unjust Fortune led on Lois and Martina, the two lovers who are entombed here, to a cruel death: Thus they ended their days in bitter longing. Give them your tears, give them your lamentations, ye who read this."

MASUCCIO

YOU may well set down the tale I have told you as one quite as cruel and horrible as it is mournful and piteous. I know not, forsooth, whether the subject thereof will affect the minds of others in the same manner in which it affected mine. In my case it happens that, as often as I see a leper and remember what he is, so often rises before my eyes the spectacle of these two unhappy lovers lying dead in that stable folded in a close embrace, tossed over in the mud of the floor and disfigured with their own blood. For which reason not only have I lost all the compassion and charity I felt formerly for this wretched blemished folk, but there has come to me a hatred of them so great that I am fain to believe Nature has given to me a warrant to fall upon each one I may meet by way of working vengeance for the fate of the unhappy lovers. Now, because I call to mind how I have already given my promise that I would do my best to wipe out the stains of grief I have lately caused by some new pleasantry, I will let my pen have done with all such miseries, and, leaving the two poor lovers to rest in peace, I will give you in succession thereto another history so vastly unlike the last that, as in reading the one you must needs let fall tears without ceasing, so in reading the other you will laugh from beginning to end.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-FIRST NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-second

ARGUMENT

A WOMAN OF VENICE, AMONGST MANY OTHER ADMIRERS, IS BELOVED BY A FLORENTINE, WHO DESPATCHES TO HER HIS SERVANT WITH A MESSAGE THAT THE ABBESS OF SANTA CHIARA IS FAIN TO SEE HER. BOTH SHE AND HER HUSBAND BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE; WHEREUPON SHE, BY MEANS OF VERY SUBTLE CRAFT, IS LED TO THE FLORENTINE'S HOUSE, IN WHICH THAT VERY SAME NIGHT A FIRE BREAKS OUT. THE CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH GOES TO HELP QUENCH THE SAME, AND, FINDING THERE THE LADY, OF WHOM HE HIMSELF IS ENAMOURED, HE CAUSES HER TO BE CAST INTO PRISON, FROM WHICH THE WAITING WOMAN OF THE FLORENTINE LIBERATES HER BY A PRETTY STRATAGEM, AND REMAINS THERE IN THE LADY'S STEAD. THE NEXT MORNING THE OLD WOMAN IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE SIGNORIA IN PLACE OF THE YOUNG ONE, THE CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH IS PUT TO RIDICULE, AND THE LADY RETURNS TO HER HUSBAND WITHOUT ANY HURT WHATEVER.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MESSER ZACCARIA BARO

EXORDIUM

BECAUSE for a long time past, my magnificent and most generous Messer Zaccaria, you have been denied all taste of the sweet and delicious fruits of your own most illustrious fatherland, I doubt not that the odour of some of its fair flowers will delight you amain: For this reason, and as a memento of our interrupted friendship, I desire, together with this present story, to make you an offering of certain of those delightful blossoms which spring in your Venice. And albeit these

blossoms were culled by a Florentine hand, still, on account of the fashion in which this deed was brought to pass, you may still find in them some diversion of that sort which the prudent and the wise are wont in their leisure time to gather from such merry conceits. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

IF my memory serves me aright, it happened the day before yesterday that, while we were talking pleasantly in your company, a tale was told to us, an absolute fact, by certain of your Venetian associates, how, about two years ago, there lived in Venice a man skilled in the art of beating out gold for the purpose of embroidery, who was called by name Guiliano Sulco. Upon this man Fortune, amongst many other temporal gifts, had bestowed a wife who, according to the reckoning of the people round about, was the loveliest and most graceful young woman then to be found in all Venice. She, over and above her great uprightness—for she was a woman endowed with numerous virtues—counted amongst her other accomplishments a marvellous skill in the art of embroidery. By this and by the handicraft plied by the husband, the pair gained so much money that, at the time of which I am writing, they had gathered together a handsome heap of several hundreds of florins.

The fame of the beauty of this young woman, whose name was Giustina, was already spread through the whole of Venice, and on this account many and divers youths, of noble families and of the people, Venetian citizens and strangers alike, became most ardently enamoured of her. But with regard to the dame herself, who, as it has been already stated, was no less richly endowed with honesty than with beauty, it seemed as if her virtue had let enter and abide in her young heart a hard block of ice, which effectually kept off any danger which might arise from the blazing darts of Love. Therefore she recked naught of all her crowd of lovers, or of their oglings and workings to win her favour; and, however

noble and comely, rich and young these might be, she held them even of less account than the basest servants. Her husband, being advised of this conduct of his wife, not only put far away from him any jealous suspicions which might well have arisen in his heart on account of the great love he had for her, but likewise held her doubly dear, and committed to her the entire direction, charge, and government of their common honour; and she, as a wise woman, did not grow in any wise haughty or overbearing from the enjoyment of so great liberty, but, keeping a praiseworthy reputation, she seemed only bent on seeking how she might further add to her own worthiness and good name.

Now it happened that, amongst the numerous and importunate crowd which followed in vain in the footsteps of our Giustina, was a certain young Florentine, who was fully as astute and well-versed in gallantry as he was seemly and pleasant in his manner. This youth, either on his own account or in the employ of others, carried on a large traffic in merchandize in Venice, and he—having seen and duly proved by many and manifest instances how great was the young woman's integrity, how neither the greed of wealth nor the passion for any lover whomsoever could lead her to the commission of any lascivious act—took thought how he might entangle her by some artful deceit; and, as he happened to have in his household an old Slavonian woman who was well trained and experienced and intelligent in such matters, he gave to her full instructions as to what he wanted her to do. The woman forthwith gathered certain delicate herbs, and with the same she made a choice salad which she took with her to the house of Giuliano, and, having greeted him with a pleasant smile, she spake thus: "The Abbess of Santa Chiara sends you these herbs out of our own convent garden, and begs of you that you will do your best to serve her by sending to her a pound of gold thread, of which she is fain to make trial for the working of certain embroideries which, with the assistance of her nuns, she has undertaken to produce; and if she should find this sample to her liking—as indeed she thinks she will—she will get

you to draw for her several pounds of gold thread every month."

The maestro, mightily pleased at what he heard, tendered thanks to the abbess for her gift, and straightway picked out a pound of the finest gold thread he had by him, and, having notified the price thereof, told the woman that he would be able always in the future to serve her with ware of a similar quality. After she had done this errand, the messenger returned well content to her master, and having taken further counsel with him as to what they should do next, she went to the maestro a few days afterwards bearing a handbasket filled with rare fruits, and smiling as she spoke said to him: "Madonna sends you her salutation and blessing, and says that the gold thread you sent her is exactly suitable for her purpose, wherefore she desires you to send her ten other pounds of the same; so for every day's labour you will find that you reap no small advantage from this fresh customer. Likewise she sends these few fruits out of the garden of the convent as an offering to your wife, and says that she wishes by all means to know her, not only on account of the current report of her worth and honesty of carriage, but because she is, as everyone declares, the most skilful embroideress of our city, and one from whom the young damsels of the convent might well learn some dainty stitches. On this account she begs and prays of you, supposing it should not be irksome to you so to do, that on the day before the festival of our Santa Chiara, which falls in a very brief space of time, you will send her thither, where, in the company of the nieces and sisters-in-law of our abbess, she may spend two or three days with great pleasure and contentment. If you should assent to this, she will give directions to the gentlewomen aforesaid, albeit they are of the chief nobility of the city, that they take their way past this house of yours, and convey your wife away with them in honourable fashion, and afterwards bring her back to you in the same manner."

The maestro, being well aware that it was a custom amongst women of Venice to go on these occasions to stay and pass several nights in the monasteries where

they might happen to have friends or kinsfolk amongst the inmates, seeing that all other times entrance to these places is forbidden to everybody, gave neither much nor little heed to the trick which was being prepared, and was all the less suspicious thereanent because he was fully assured that this invitation, and the purchase of the gold thread as well, came from the abbess herself. And because he had, as we have already said, the greatest faith in the well-approved honesty of his wife, he made answer, without giving further thought to the matter, that he was quite willing to send his wife to the convent whenever and in whatever fashion the abbess might desire, and that if at any time the gentlewomen aforesaid might deign to pass by his house, he would gladly suffer his wife to go to the convent in their company. Then, having given to the old woman the gold which she asked for, and having been paid liberally for the same, he and his wife, to whom he told what had passed, were marvellously pleased at having thus begun to have dealings with such a lady, and it seemed a thousand years to him and many more to his wife until the festival aforesaid should come, not so much in respect of the foundation of an intimacy with the abbess, which thing might prove to them a source of profit both present and to come, as for the making acquaintance of those young nuns in the convent, and of divers ladies of high rank, not under vows, and of diverting herself in the company of the same.

When the old woman returned to her master the two rejoiced amain, for that everything now seemed to be marching according to their design, and when the appointed day had come, the Florentine, as had been duly determined, conveyed cautiously into his house seven or eight women of the sort who were accustomed to ply for public gain, some of them widows, some with the seeming of matrons, and some with that of maids, handsomely dressed and decked with sumptuous gems as if they had been in truth ladies of the highest families in Venice. Then, when these had been duly settled in a barge covered after the Venetian fashion, they set forth attended by divers of their servants and hand-

maids, and by the old woman who had acted as messenger. They went leisurely on their way, and after they had made a long circuit through other canals they approached the piazza of Santa Croce, where Maestro Giuliano lived. Thereupon the woman at once got out of the boat and calling upon Giustina in a jocund voice, said to her, "The kinsfolk of madonna are here ready to receive you in their barge and take you back to the monastery." Then Giustina, following her husband's directions, first adorned herself richly, and afterwards entered the barge, where she was received in friendly wise by the ladies, while her husband, looking upon the company and judging from their seeming that they were of high degree, was quite content to let her go. Then they set forth, and the prow of the barge being directed towards Santo Apostolo, where the Florentine kept house, they arrived there in a very short time.

When they had come to their destination, one of the women aforesaid cried out: "Why should we not call for Madonna Teodora, seeing that she was one of the first to be invited?" And all the others having given their assent, they called to fetch her, and forthwith there came to one of the windows a black woman, who said: "My mistress begs you, in case the delay should be irksome to you, that you will come up and tarry here for a little until she shall have finished her dressing." Whereupon all the women, without waiting for any farther invitation, leaped on shore, and having taken Giustina by the hand, they went into the house in very gamesome mood: When they had gone inside, this went into one chamber, and that into another; this went out, and that came in, until at last Giustina found herself in a room alone. Very soon the Florentine entered with arms outstretched and clasped her round the neck, and, after he had in a few words let her know concerning the trick which had been put upon her, he implored her, by the long and fervent love which he had borne and still bore her, and for the sake of her own honour, that she would be ready and willing to give him, without any farther opposition, that favour which she could not now deny him even if she were so minded.

Now that this modest, well-conducted young woman, who had hitherto preserved so well her honour, saw herself brought to this difficult pass, I leave it to those ladies who may some time or other have found themselves in similar case to decide what she did; whether she acted with due discretion and made a virtue of necessity, or whether she put forth her strength in a vain resistance, let these ladies give judgment as to what most women would have said and done. All I know for certain is; that after Giustina had supped in jovial wise with the Florentine, without again seeing aught of the women who had conducted her thither, it came to pass between the second and the third hour of the night* that a fire broke out in the house, kindled either by the sumptuous preparations which had been made, or from some other cause. Whereupon a mighty uproar having arisen on account of the same, as is always the case in Venice, it chanced that one of the captains of the watch, who was himself enamoured of Giustina and one of her most persistent followers, was going through that quarter of the city, and hearing the cries of "Fire! Fire!" he, according to the duty laid upon him by his office, quickly beat down the doors and went up into the house. Then, having given orders to his following to see to the quenching of the fire, he, so as to carry out the accustomed regulations in cases of this sort, stationed himself before the door of the master of the house to prevent the crowd of people who entered from stealing any of his goods. Scarcely had he taken up his position there when he saw approach the Florentine holding Giustina by the hand, both of them apparently half-stunned and terrified and fain to flee from the burning house. On account of the number of torches carried by his followers, the captain of the watch knew for certain at once that it was Giustina he saw, and, confounded by grief and amazement, he felt that the fervent love he had hitherto borne her was forthwith changed into the fiercest hatred, and, had he not been kept back therefrom by virtue of the office he bore, he would willingly have passed his sword again and again through her body, so mad-

* Between seven and eight in the evening.

dened was he by the thought that she, whom he had always regarded as holding a particular eminence over all the women in the world for her honesty and pure life, who had never even satisfied his longings by a single kind glance, should be thus discovered by him in the guise of a common harlot in the house of a foreign trafficker, and one, most likely, who was merely the factor of others. Nevertheless, seeing that the fire was by this time put out, he kept back his anger somewhat, and determined, without giving farther thought to the matter, to have her taken on the following morning to the public brothel with the drums beating, as was permitted by law in the case of women who might be caught publicly in adultery. With a great show of rage he snatched her out of the hands of the unlucky Florentine, and then went with his following forth from the house, taking Giustina into one of the chief streets where stood the prison, and having left her there in hold, as if she had been a serving-woman of the basest sort, he charged the jailers that they should keep strict watch over her until the following morning. When he had done this he once more began to perustrate his quarter of the city as the duties of his office required.

The Florentine, who had remained behind vexed with grief too keen to be described—and with good reason—brought after a while his harassed wits somewhat into order, and, aided by his love and by his own natural astuteness, concocted a plan by which it seemed that he might regain possession of the prey to win which he had spent so great care and labour, and which had been so quickly reft from him by misadventure. As he knew well where the prison was, and of what mettle were the officers who had charge of Giustina, he instructed the old woman what to do, and she, having filled a basket with capons and bread, and two flasks of good wine, went to the prison in the barge as quickly as she could go, taking a servant with her. When she came before the keepers she begged them tenderly that for the love of God they would suffer her to give somewhat to eat to the poor young servant of her master's who, through the fault of the captain of the watch, had been wrongly

laid in hold, having been seized and taken from the house starving and weeping and grieving sorely. Wherefore, so as to win their goodwill and consent to her request, she gave them for themselves the greater part of the food, which in sooth she had conveyed thither for that same purpose, and they, what though they were greedy and very ill-conditioned, at once softened towards her, and bade her enter at her pleasure. The old woman having gone into the cell where Giustina was, at once gave her the cloak she was wearing and charged her to get forth as quickly as she could, and to embark in the boat outside where the servant was waiting. To her great joy, the young woman managed to carry out all these directions without let of any sort, or any questioning by the jailers, and having leapt into the boat, she was taken by the servant straightway back to the place whence she had been torn with so great violence only a short time before.

When the next morning had come, the captain of the watch, although his anger over the affair waxed greater every hour, and although he grew more and more infuriated in considering the cruel punishment he was determined to inflict, decided not to proceed with the case until he should first have taken counsel with certain of his friends. Wherefore, having let assemble the same, he laid before them, with no little savage joy in his heart the while, the whole of the cruel business, and furthermore told them what he was minded to do for the final chastisement of such an abandoned woman. After they had laughed heartily, and passed many a merry quip thereanent, it seemed meet to them all that the matter should be submitted to the judgment of the Signoria. So they went in a body to the palace, and having set before the Doge the affair in all its particulars, they next gave the word that the young woman should at once be brought privily thither, in order that they might be better informed as to what penalty was her due, and learn how, and for what purpose, and by whom she had been conveyed into the Florentine's house. They bade four of the prison guards to bring Giustina thither carefully wrapped up in her clothes, in such wise that

no one could recognize her; whereupon these fellows, having gone to the prison, laid hold of the cunning old woman, and after they had tied her up closely, they took her before the Signoria, of which the greater part of the members were present. She, when she saw herself in the presence of so great state, began to cry aloud: "Justice, justice, for the love of God, against this cheating captain of the watch of yours! For last night, when a fire broke out in my master's house, he and his company forced their way in, and without any cause whatever he handed me over to his tipstaves, and kept me in prison in such evil case that I have had the worst night that ever a woman spent. Now, in sooth, he has hailed me before you, bound as though I had pilfered the treasury of Saint Mark. I do not, nor can any of you see what offence a poor old woman like me, the servant of another, can have committed against him."

The captain of the watch, prudent man as he was, felt utterly confounded in mind when he saw the old woman before him and listened to what she had to say, as everyone may well believe. Not only did he stand speechless, but his face was changed so mightily in seeming that the Doge and the whole body of the Signoria perceived he must surely have fallen into some grave error; so they at once commanded to let go free the old woman, and to send her back to her dwelling, which thing was done forthwith. Then some of them in good faith, and some of them in banter, demanded to know of the captain of the watch whether he had been waking or asleep, and by what mischance he could have laid hands on the poor old woman; whereupon he became so distraught that he failed to let them know by his reply how the thing could indeed have come to pass. Then, with all sorts of merry japes, they gave judgment in the case and decided that the burning passion and the great desire he harboured towards the wife of Maestro Giuliano had worked such havoc in his brainpan that he was led to regard an ugly old harridan as the fair and youthful dame he loved; and thus, flouted and bemused and ill-content with his day's work, he returned to his home. And the prudent and wary Florentine,

who with so great contrivance and with so many strange accidents had seized and lost and regained the lady of whom he was enamoured, sent her back to her husband without letting arise any scandal, or without letting the good man know what had really happened, with the same device he had used in taking her thence.

MASUCCIO

WE may, in sooth, give our highest word of praise to the ingenious Florentine, seeing that in a strange country he was able to carry off the prize in the race against so many coursers of singular excellence, and ultimately by his aforesaid astuteness to bring the affair to a prosperous issue, after suffering a mischance so grave as that which befell him. And because, however much we may discourse concerning the vicissitudes and freaks of fortune, there will always remain somewhat more to be said, I will exhibit to you in the following novel the misfortunes, yet more strange and varied and pitiless, which befell two constant and noble lovers by reason of their excessive love—a narrative differing widely from those told hitherto, inasmuch as these two were brought to their end with tears of blood and with violent death.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-SECOND NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-third

ARGUMENT

MARIOTTO, A YOUNG MAN OF SIENA, WHO IS ENAMOURED OF GIANNOZZA, TAKES FLIGHT TO ALEXANDRIA ON ACCOUNT OF A MURDER WHICH HE HAS COMMITTED. GIANNOZZA FEIGNS TO BE DEAD, AND, HAVING BEEN TAKEN OUT OF HER TOMB, GOES IN SEARCH OF HER LOVER. IN THE MEANTIME MARIOTTO, HAVING HEARD THE NEWS OF HER DEATH, RETURNS TO SIENA, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY DIE LIKEWISE. HE IS RECOGNIZED AND TAKEN, AND HIS HEAD IS STRICKEN OFF. THE LADY FINDING NO TRACE OF HER LOVER IN ALEXANDRIA GOES BACK TO SIENA, WHERE SHE LEARNS THAT HE HAS BEEN BEHEADED, AND THEN DIES OF GRIEF ON HIS CORPSE.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, THE DUKE
OF AMALFI *

EXORDIUM

THE more ill-starred and unhappy the varying fortunes of love may be, the more sedulously ought the man, who writes of the same, to strive to make them known to all lovers—to those who are ardent, and also to those who are discreet. And because, my most illustrious lord, I have for some years past had acquaintance with you—at a certain season when you were entangled in divers snares which Cupid set for you, and again when I beheld you enjoying the tender passion in most seemly fashion—I determined some long time ago to give you a full and true account of the most pitiful fate which befell two unhappy lovers; so that you,

* Antonio Piccolomini, a nephew of Pius II. He married a natural daughter of Ferdinand I. of Naples.

taught by your wonted prudence and your vast store of virtues, might be able to tell us rightly, after duly considering the case of these two, which of them loved in the more fervent wise.

THE NARRATIVE

IN these five days, and not a great while ago, this story was related by a certain gentleman of your city of Siena, and one of no small worship, to a company of gentle ladies, telling them how in recent times there abode in Siena a young man of good family, well-mannered and very comely in seeming, Mariotto Mignanelli by name. This youth, having become ardently enamoured of a fair and graceful damsel named Giannozza, the daughter of a notable and highly-esteemed citizen, a member, I think, of the house of the Saraceni, contrived on his part in the course of time to win from the damsel her most ardent love in return for his own. Now, after they had for some long time fed their eyesight by gazing at the sweet and pleasant flowers of love, and had nursed their amorous desire to have taste of the delicious fruits which were their due, they began to search and to devise many and diverse plans how they might compass the same; but finding none which might be essayed with security, the young girl, who was fully as prudent as she was lovely, made up her mind to take her lover for her husband by stealth; so that, if by the untoward working of circumstance their happiness should be denied to them, they would be provided with a shield herewith to hide from the world the error they had committed.

Wherefore, to secure the fulfillment of this deed, they bribed by a gift of money a certain Augustinian friar, through whose ministration they secretly became bound by the matrimonial tie, and with specious arguments of this sort they let themselves be lulled into a secure and certain frame of mind, and gave free rein to their ardent desires, the one enjoying therefrom fully as much pleas-

ure as the other. Now, after they had spent some time thus happily over the gratification of their secret, and in a sense lawful love, it came to pass that their evil and unfriendly fortune by adverse working overturned the whole fabric of their desires both present and to come. This calamity was brought about by Mariotto, who happened one day to come to high words with another honourable citizen of the town, and not to words only, for the affair soon went on to blows in such wise that Mariotto smote his adversary on the head with a cudgel, and of this blow he died in a very short time. On this account Mariotto went into hiding, and, having been diligently sought for by the officials of the court without being found, he was not only condemned by the lords of the council and the Podesta to perpetual exile, but was likewise banished by proclamation as a rebel against the law.

Only those who have themselves been pierced by wounds like this will be able to judge aright as to the greatness and the intensity of this crowning sorrow, or to keep count of the tears shed by these two most unhappy lovers, so short a time united by secret bond, over what seemed to be a long, or even in their belief a perpetual separation: Their grief was in sooth so cruel and bitter that, when the moment came for their last farewell and they stood folded in each other's arms, they might well have been taken for those whose souls death had already seized. However, letting their grief abate for a little, they indulged in a hope that peradventure in the course of time it might be granted to Mariotto; by some turn of affairs, to come back to his native place: Wherefore they agreed it would be well for him to depart not only from Tuscany, but from Italy itself, and to make his way to Alexandria, in which city there was residing an uncle of his named Ser Niccolo Mignanelli, a man concerned in large traffic and a merchant widely known. Then, having given her full directions as to the future, and many assurances that he, though so far distant from her, would visit her in the letters he would write, the pair of lovers bade each other farewell with tears which seemed to have no end.

The wretched Mariotto took his departure after having made known to a brother of his all the details of his secret, begging him at the same time that he would, most carefully and before everything else, keep him well informed as to any accident which might befall his Giannozza, by writing constantly and setting down most particularly all that happened. Then, having set forth on his journey after giving these instructions, he took his way towards Alexandria, which city he reached in due time. He found his uncle who was living there, and by him was welcomed in joyful and friendly wise, and before long he let his kinsman know the whole story of the affair in which he had been concerned of late. The uncle, being a man of sound judgment, was greatly disquieted as he listened, not so much indeed with regard to the case of the man slain by mischance, as to the affront put thereby upon so many kinsfolk. However, knowing full well that censure of offences past and gone is worth little more than nothing, he did his best with Mariotto's help to restore peace, and gave much thought as to how they might in the course of time hit upon some remedy fitting for the case in point. He likewise committed to Mariotto's hands the care of certain of his commercial affairs, and would often come anear the youth, at such times as he might be vexed with his heavy grief and constant weeping, and console him as best he could. A month never passed in which Mariotto did not receive letters from his Giannozza and from his brother also. These letters, in sooth, coming during this cruel time of misfortune and long absence, were a marvellously great comfort and consolation to both of the lovers.

While the matter stood in this wise it happened that the father of Giannozza found himself greatly besought and importuned by divers suitors who were eager to have his daughter in marriage; but she, making use of various fictitious arguments, would have naught to say to any one of them. But in the end it came to pass that being urged and constrained by her father to take for her husband one of the suitors for whom she could find no ground of refusal, her agonized soul was torn by a

cruel conflict so incessantly and in so grievous a fashion that death itself would have seemed to her more welcome than life under such conditions. In addition to this, she had by this time begun to look upon the return of the husband, whom she had married by stealth, and whom she loved so dearly, as a vain hope, and likewise to perceive that were she to disclose to her father the whole truth concerning the matter it could profit nothing, but would rather kindle more grievously his wrath against her; so she determined to make good all her faults by embarking in a project which was no less strange than perilous and hard of execution, one the like of which had never been heard of before, and, at the same time, apt to imperil both her honour and her life.

Thus, with her heart kept up by the great courage that was in her, she sent word to her father to tell him that she was altogether ready to do his pleasure, and then summoned to her that same friar who had been the original schemer in the business. To him she disclosed in very cautious manner what thing it was she was minded to do, and begged him that he would favour her plan by giving her his aid therein. The friar, as soon as he knew what it was she wanted, showed himself to be, as is the wonted practice of such folk, somewhat amazed and timid and slow to act; but she on her part soon roused his ardour and activity by means of the virtue and of the magic spells worked by Messer San Giovanni Boccad'oro,* and brought him into the mind to speed her project with all his strength. Then, on account of the pressing haste which drove her on, the friar went his way as quickly as he could, and compounded with his own hands, being in sooth an expert in such matters, a certain water made up by the blending of divers subtle powders, and limited in its action in such manner that if anyone should drink of the same he would not only remain for three days in a deep sleep, but would seem to anyone who might look upon him to be verily and indeed dead. This potion he sent forthwith to the lady.

Now Giannozza, as soon as she had despatched to her Mariotto by a courier full intelligence of what she

* The patron saint of bribery.

was minded to do, and had got clear understanding from the friar concerning all things which she must needs carry out on her own behalf, joyfully drank off the medicated water. Then there very soon came upon her so profound a stupor that she fell to the earth like one dead. Her maids, as soon as they saw what had happened, raised a loud outcry, which forthwith brought the old father, together with a large number of other people, to learn what might be the cause of the noise. When he found how his only daughter, whom he loved so dearly, was already dead, he—stricken the while with such grief as he had never tasted before—straightway made them bring in divers physicians to try by every remedy they knew how to use, to call her back to life; but, since not one of these availed aught, everyone there present was fully assured that she had met her death through the sudden stroke which had fallen upon her.*

During the whole of that day, and during the following night as well, they kept a most careful watch over her, and, for the reason that her attendants remarked in her no signs save those of death, she was buried the next day with sumptuous funeral rites in a noble tomb in the church of Santo Agostino, to the unbounded grief of her afflicted father, and with the weeping and mourning of her kinsmen and friends and of all the people of Siena. But when it was about the hour of midnight the reverend friar betook himself to the church aforesaid, and by the help of a companion of his drew Giannozza forth from the sepulchre, and, according to the plan which had been settled, bore her into his own chamber. Now, seeing that the hour was close at hand when the effect of the potion, compounded so as to act for a certain time, should have run its course, they succeeded by the help of a fire and of certain other needful provisions in bringing her back to life, though not without great difficulty. Then, when she had been restored to her right mind, and after three days had elapsed, she set forth in the company of the good brother—she herself being disguised in the habit of a friar—to Porto Pisano, where

* Orig., *da sopravvenu tale goccia fosse morta.*

the galley plying between Acquamorta* and Alexandria was bound to call. Having found all things in the transit aforesaid duly in order, she set sail in the galley; but because voyages at sea are always wont to be vastly more prolonged than the travellers desire, either through contrary winds or through having to take on board fresh merchandize, it came to pass that the galley for various reasons was delayed in coming to its destination for several months beyond the time when it was due.

Now Gargano, the brother of Mariotto, by way of carrying out the directions left with him by his well-beloved brother, immediately sent a full account of the sudden death of Giannozza to the ill-starred Mariotto, sorrowing himself greatly over the news, and likewise telling his brother in what fashion she had been mourned and where her sepulchre was, and how a little time after her own death her old father, who held her in such great love, had passed away from this life by reason of the heavy sorrow he felt. And these letters written by Gargano were sped more swiftly and fortunately by the working of hostile and malignant Fate than was the messenger who had been despatched by the unhappy Giannozza; for, just as if to prepare for these devoted lovers the bitter and bloody death which in the end was their portion, it came to pass that the messenger of Giannozza, who had taken passage in a caravel laden with corn and bound for Alexandria, was taken prisoner by corsairs and slain.

On this account Mariotto, being possessed of no other intelligence than that sent by his brother, held the same indeed to be the truth. Wherefore I bid you consider, O reader, if there be any spirit of compassion within you, how mightily he found himself grief-stricken and afflicted—and with good reason—by the bitter cruelty of this news! The anguish which wrung his heart was so intense and so great that he felt no longer any wish to live, and all the persuasions and comforting words of his good uncle were of no avail to soothe him. Thus, having passed some long time in bitter weeping, he at last resolved to go back to Siena, in order that he might make

* Aigues Mortes, then an important commercial city

his way on foot, under the cover of some disguise or other, to the sepulchre in which, as he believed, his Giannozza lay buried, and there let his grief have such full course that his life must perforce come to an end thereby. If, indeed, he should by chance be recognized, he would deem himself fortunate to be put on his trial in respect to the homicide which he had committed: This scheme aforesaid he hoped to carry out in case fortune should second his efforts and keep secret for a while the news of his return. In the meantime he was possessed with the belief that she, whom he loved more dearly than he loved himself (and who, indeed, loved him in equal degree), was dead.

Having decided upon this course, he awaited the sailing of the galley of the Venetians for the parts of the west,* and without saying to his uncle a single word anent his purpose he embarked in the vessel aforesaid, hurrying eagerly towards the death which he was fore-ordained to meet. After a very short voyage he arrived in Naples, from which place he betook himself by land towards Tuscany with all speed, and contrived to enter Siena in the disguise of a pilgrim without being recognized by anybody. There he took lodging at a house of entertainment little frequented by guests, and then, without having let any of his acquaintance know of his presence, he made his way at an hour which suited his purpose to the church where his Giannozza was buried, and, standing in front of her sepulchre, he wept very bitterly, and, if such a thing had been possible, he would gladly have crept into the tomb itself, so that in death he might have beside him, as an abiding companion, that most lovely and delicate body, the sweetness of which he was not permitted to enjoy during his life.

And herewith all his thoughts and desires were firmly set to bring to an issue the purpose aforesaid, what though he never ceased his wonted grief and weeping. So, having got into his possession by very cautious working divers instruments of iron, and having concealed himself one evening after vespers within the church, he

* Orig., *per ponente*, towards the setting sun, opposed to *levante* the rising.

worked with such vigour during the following night that he succeeded in putting aside the covering of the sepulchre by means of his crowbar. Just as he was on the point of entering the tomb it chanced that the sacristan who had come to ring the bell for matins, heard a sound and, having gone to ascertain what might be the cause thereof, he found Mariotto engaged in the aforesaid work. The sacristan, deeming that the man he saw must be some thief who was come thither with the intent to rifle the bodies of the dead, cried out, at the top of his voice, "A thief! a thief!" whereupon all the friars ran to his cry and laid hands on Mariotto. Then, having opened the gates and let enter a great number of laymen of all sorts, they found the ill-fated lover, who was still wrapped round with his garb of basest rags, and at once knew him to be no other than Mariotto Mignanelli. There they detained him, and, soon as it was day, all Siena was full of the news of what had happened.

When the rumour had come to the ears of the Signoria orders were issued to the Podesta to go and fetch the prisoner, and to put in force straightway whatever the laws and the constitution of the city might direct to be done in such a case. And thus Mariotto, bound and a captive, was taken to the palace of the Podesta and was put to the torture of the strappado;* but, without letting himself be subjected to be tormented much, he confessed point by point wherefore he had been led to take the desperate course of returning to Siena. And, despite the fact that every single person throughout the city felt for him the deepest compassion, and that his fate was especially bewept amongst the ladies—they in their gentleness deeming that he was, in sooth, the one instance in the world of a perfect lover, and each one of them being ready and willing to redeem his life with her own blood—he was nevertheless condemned on the first day of his trial to lose his head, which sentence was duly carried out at the given time, since all the efforts of his friends and kinsfolk prevailed naught to mend his evil fortune.

* The victim was hoisted up, tied by the arms, to a lofty beam, and then suddenly let fall.

In the meantime the most unhappy Giannozza, under the guidance of the friar aforesaid, arrived in Alexandria after the lapse of several months, and after having undergone many and divers mischances on the voyage. She went forthwith to the house of Ser Niccolo, and, when she had let him know who she was and had told him her name, she added the reason which had brought her thither and every other accident which had lately befallen her, whereupon the good man was filled with amazement and distress at one and the same time. Then, after he had given her fitting reception, and caused her to put on woman's clothing once more, and taken leave of the friar, he told the hapless Giannozza in what manner and in what desperate mood her Mariotto had fled from Alexandria on account of the tidings which had come to him, without letting any one know what he was minded to do. He likewise told her how all had bewailed him as one dead already, seeing that he had turned his steps towards what could prove to be naught else than certain death.

I will let him who may have experience meet for the task consider well the situation and say in what measure the anguish which tore Giannozza's heart as she listened, exceeded—as well it might—all the griefs hitherto undergone by her lover and herself, forasmuch as I myself deem that any words which may be spoken thereanent will profit nothing. After she had in some measure come back to herself, and had taken counsel with the good merchant, who was as another father to her, they decided, after holding many and divers deliberations and shedding together many burning tears, to betake themselves with all the speed they could use to Siena, where, whether they might find Mariotto dead or alive, they would do their best by whatsoever remedial means might be vouchsafed to them in their extreme necessity at least to save spotless the honour of Giannozza. Having set his affairs in order with as little loss to himself as he could compass, and caused the lady to put on male attire once more, they found suitable means of transit; and, meeting with a prosperous wind for their voyage, they came in a short space of time to the shores of

Tuscany, and disembarked at Piombino. From this place they took their way privily to a certain farm which Ser Niccolo owned in the neighbourhood of Siena, and when they asked what might be the news they learned that three days ago their Mariotto had been beheaded.

As soon as the bitter truth of these words was fully realized by them—what though they had hitherto held for certain that the issue of the affair must be none other than this—they stood blanched and half dead with affliction when once they knew this dreadful thing had surely come to pass. How great their sorrow was, the nature of this cruel calamity will let you judge aright: The lamentations of Giannozza, crying out loudly, "Alas, woe is me!" were so passionate that they would have moved to pity even a heart of marble. Nevertheless, having been soothed and kindly tended for some time by Ser Niccolo, and having given good heed to his wise and kindly counsels, the two resolved that, in their condition of dire adversity, it behoved them to look alone to the preservation of the honour and good name of their numerous band of kinsfolk; and, in order to compass this end, to arrange that the poor young woman should secretly gain admission to some religious house of the strictest rule, where she might lament with bitter tears her own ill-fortune, the death of her beloved Mariotto, and her present misery, as long as it should be granted to her to live. This project they carried out to the full with the closest secrecy, and when she had taken up her dwelling in the convent, without having told aught of her story to anyone but the abbess herself, after a very short time had rolled away she made an end of her most wretched life in grief which consumed her inmost soul and in weeping tears of blood—in fasting by day and in waking by night, and in calling without ceasing upon her beloved Mariotto.

IT is certain that impassioned women will feel more pity than strong-souled men over the many doleful misadventures lately described; and, over and beyond this, these ladies will assuredly set down the love of Giannozza as unmatched and fervent beyond compare—greater indeed than that of Mariotto. But if perchance this question should ever come up for debate, the man who loves wisely will be able to prove by most valid reasoning that the love of the ill-starred Mariotto was, beyond comparison, the mightier and the more intense. For this reason, admitting that the young woman really did accomplish deeds which were wonderful to be done by one of her sex in her journey in search of her lover, she was nevertheless stirred up to attempt them through the belief that she would find him a living man, and would hereafter live long and joyful days with him. But as to the hapless lover, he, believing his love to be dead already, was minded to go to her as she was, with all the speed that was possible, with no other aim before him than to lay down his own life, which thing indeed came to pass. But now, letting all these doleful matters remain for the consideration of others, I will in the next place relate to you a most laughable adventure, telling how an over-jealous loon of an inn-keeper, though he was a wary fellow enough, was induced to take his wife on his own mare down to the ship of the gallant who was her lover, being moved to this deed by the covetous expectation of some small gain therefrom.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-THIRD NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-fourth

ARGUMENT

TOBIA, A RAGUSAN, TAKES HIS PLEASURE WITH THE WIFE OF AN INNKEEPER OF GIOBENNAZZO, AND BY A MOST SUBTLE TRICK INDUCES THE HUSBAND TO BRING HER TO THE SHIP RIDING ON HIS OWN MARE. THE HUSBAND ON HIS RETURN HOME FINDS HIS WIFE GONE; AND, AFTER HAVING FOR A LONG TIME LAMENTED OVER THE SHORT FAITH OF THE RAGUSAN, MARRIES ANOTHER WOMAN; AND, LETTING GO ALL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS FIRST WIFE, ENJOYS HIS LIFE IN COMPANY OF THE SECOND.

TO HIS MAGNIFICENCE THE BARON OF PRIGNIANO *

EXORDIUM

FOR the reason that many and divers troubles have stood in my way, and that the leisure and the pleasant opportunity of taking up the pen which I had laid down have been denied to me, my hearty good lord, I have until now delayed to set down in writing the novel which I destined for you—the particulars of which were given to you and to me at the same time. But those sweet and delightful fruits, which I gathered during the most joyous term of our friendship, have found in me such meet resting-place that, having let quiet my labouring brain, I now apply myself to the telling of the present story with no little pleasure; so that—because you will assuredly bear in mind my affection, and will not fail to write again to me—it may be the means of letting us regard one another continually with

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Messer Fabiano Rosello, *regio Segretario*.

the eyes of the mind; for, as you must know well by this time, the practice of letter-writing in itself availeth greatly, inasmuch as it can make parted friends believe that they are together.

THE NARRATIVE

A YEAR or so ago there lived at Giovenazzo a certain goodman called Tonto de Leo, who, perchance for the reason that he was minded to earn for himself and his family a living with as little bodily travail as possible, had taken up the calling of an innkeeper in the chief piazza of the town. Now, as he had to wife a very comely and graceful young woman whose name was Lella, it came to pass that there was always gathered together in front of the inn a numerous and importunate crowd of young men casting amorous glances at the fair hostess. It was, in sooth, as if an unlicensed fair was being held there all day long. Wherefore the good host, albeit he was of a most jealous nature, in order to let the world see that he, as a new tavern-keeper, was able to collect a goodly crowd of customers, was fain to put up with these doings, being sometimes contented and sometimes perturbed therewith, as is the manner of jealous men.

It happened that a well-favoured young merchant of Ragusa, Tobia by name, who was at that time trafficking in the seaboard places of Apulia, and purchasing grain wherewith to load a ship of his which was lying at Monopoli, took the road and went to Giovenazzo. He had not been long in the place before certain of his friends let him know all about the beauty and the love-some ways of the hostess aforesaid, and how, if time and opportunity should be granted to her, she would fully satisfy the longings of whomsoever might undertake to win her. Tobia, as soon as he heard this, was vastly more desirous to set eyes on the hostess than to be well lodged, and forthwith took up his quarters at the inn of our friend Tonto, who, deeming that he might draw no small profit from the arrival of such a guest, not only

gave him joyful reception on his own behalf, but likewise caused his wife to welcome him in most friendly wise; for which reason, having become very intimate with them, in a very short space of time Tobia grew to long after naught else than the pleasure and delight which he took in Madonna Lella. And it fell out that she became as madly in love with the Ragusan as he was with her, but she knew well enough that the excessive caution used by her husband would never suffer them to take their pleasure one with another as they both desired, and likewise that Tobia would not be able to abide long with them: And to him it seemed a fault of nature that a young woman of such marvellous beauty should have been joined in matrimony with such a poltroon, and should be forced to remain there as the ensign of his target;* so he determined to use the best wit he possessed to carry her off with him, and thus at the same time to satisfy himself, to work an especial pleasure to Lella, and to take away from Tonto all occasion for the plague of jealousy in the future.

Therefore he and the young woman began to talk over divers plans, and after they had sought diligently through many of these—although certain of them seemed to promise all they could wish in the way of caution—they considered, nevertheless, that if at any time Tonto should search for his wife without finding her, he would assuredly make a mighty uproar and bellowing over the affair, and with the aid of his friends and of the numerous admirers of his wife would strain himself to the utmost to get her back. Wherefore Tobia hit upon a plan of carrying her off which was merrily conceived and pleasant enough, albeit somewhat strange and hazardous—one; moreover, which would ensure their safety in the many misadventures they might encounter. Thus, when the young woman had been fully instructed by him as to the plan he had formed, and when he had heard how the ship was only waiting for himself to go on board to set sail, he called the host and said to him: "My good

* Orig., *come segno al bersaglio*. The meaning seems to be that Lella was, as it were, the sign of the inn and the lure for customers.

Tonto, because you have given me so much honour and such kindly reception since I have been in your house, it seems to me that I may well confide in you, and make use of any assistance you may be disposed to lend me in a certain matter—concerning which you shall duly hear—which I am about to undertake for a friend of mine, and, in sooth, I hold you to be my friend likewise. The fact is, that I intend to depart to-morrow in God's name, for my ship is now all cleared for sailing. But there is hidden in the house of a certain citizen of this place a young boy of Venice,* whom I am determined to carry away with me eastward, so as not to let him fall again into the hands of the people who had him in charge. Now, because for many days past he has been tormented by continuous fever, he is so enfeebled in body that it would not be possible to carry him off without injury, except on a beast with a saddle. Wherefore it came into my mind that, if he should pay you somewhat more than your due, you might take him away upon your sumpter-mare this very night, disguised as a woman, and with his face veiled in such fashion that, when he shall pass through Bari, where he is well known, no one may be able to recognize him. In this wise we might convey him as far as Monopoli, and then on the following day you could make your way homewards; having gained a good round sum for yourself, and done me an especial favour. Nevertheless, I do not forget to caution you that you speak not a single word concerning this business to any living person, not even to your wife, who, albeit for a young woman she is very discreet indeed, is still a woman, and women are not over-reticent by nature. Indeed, rather than be lacking in something to chatter about, they will often speak concerning others more than they know; and furthermore, if it should happen that some privy matter be confided to them, and they be enjoined never to repeat the same, it will be as if there had seized upon them a sort of furious humour which will not pass from them until the secret be dis-

* In the text there is a passage, *il quale per non avendo in terra niente a soi maestri*, which is here omitted as incomprehensible.

closed, however great the scandal which may ensue therefrom. Wherefore see that you bear yourself warily; and leave to me all consideration of the service you will have to perform."

Tonto, giving ear to this well-devised fable, and perceiving that he would be able to serve his friend without any grave trouble to himself, and pocket a handsome profit at the same time, made answer that he was quite ready to discharge any duty which might be required of him, and that Tobia, need stand in no fear that he would let his wife know aught of the matter, for the reason that he was never wont to talk to her of anything save what might concern the kitchen. After Tobia had made divers other pleasant speeches, and paid him liberally, and given certain little presents to the wife and to the servant, as is always the custom with merchants before they take their departure, Tonto directed his wife to withdraw to her mother's house, and there abide until he should return, and gave the servant full charge of the business of the house. This done, they went to rest; but Tobia, who was in little humour for sleep, called Tonto about midnight and bade him get ready his mare, because he was minded to depart forthwith; whereupon the host got up quickly and prepared the beast for the road, and then returned to the house to lock the door on his wife. Having given the key to the servant, he directed the fellow to do everything which he had commanded, and after he had said farewell, he went to the spot where Tobia was, and said to him, "What have we to do now?" Tobia, who in the meantime had mounted his horse, answered, "You will find your way out of the city gates, taking your mare with you, and I will go and get the young lad mounted on my horse's crupper. When we meet outside the gate, we will duly set him on your mare." Then said Tonto, "So be it, in God's name!" and then he took his way towards the city gates.

Tobia, after he had taken a short turn round that quarter of the town, went back to the inn, and there he found the servant whom the host had left in charge sitting chilled and sleepy before a very poor fire, where-

upon he told the varlet that he had left behind a certain wallet of his at the head of the bed. Then the servant although he could with difficulty utter a word, because he was very sleepy, made answer that he could go and fetch it if he list. On this Tobia ran upstairs, and, by the help of a certain small tool which he had brought with him, he silently opened the door of Madonna Lella's chamber, and quickly made her disguise herself by putting on some garments especially provided for the occasion. Then, having drawn a hood over her hair, and arranged her garb in such wise that no man in the world would have recognized her, he led her out of the house and made her mount on the crupper behind him, and took her away to the spot where Tonto was awaiting his coming with anxiety. They both of them set about getting her upon the mare's back, and bolstered her up well on the seat, she feigning the while to be in such sad case that she could scarcely hold herself upright on the pack-saddle, and with such cunning trickery as this they set forth on their journey.

As they were passing through Bari it chanced that Tonto was asked by certain idle fellows who were standing about what his name was, and whither he was taking the woman; whereupon he, who was of a somewhat gamesome humour, and besides this wishful to serve his friend with all loyalty, made answer: "This is my wife, and I am taking her that she may earn somewhat by catching gallants at Taranto." * And with many other merry quips such as these he passed the time all the way, jesting in this fashion with all who would know what he was about. When they came to Monopoli they found the ship with the cables drawn up and ready to bear away, for the crew were only waiting till the

* Orig., *egli e mia moglie che la porto a guadagnare a lo panaile de Taranto*. The edition of 1483 gives "*alo panayle de taranto*," and l' *edizione della gatta* "*paniale*," which is probably a local word formed from *pania*, *birdlime*, and which in a way carries out the sense of what has gone before as Tonto had already used his wife as a lure at home, and the same idea of the decoy bird may have possessed him now. "*Panaile*" is a word not to be found, and Settembrini treats the passage as incomprehensible.

Ragusan should arrive: Then the merchant duly satisfied Tonto, who, after he had returned innumerable words of gratitude for all this liberality and courtesy, was fain to help his wife on board the ship in kind and friendly wise, even as he had brought her down to the seashore. When they had taken their last farewells with divers merry words the ship set sail, and Tonto, deeming that he had made a good profit, mounted his mare in jocund mood and rode back to his home by the same road which he had lately traversed on foot:

But when he reached his home, and found that his wife was no longer there, having chosen a new lord and a new country at the same time, he became vastly cunning, albeit it was now too late, and guessing how the mischance must have come to pass, and feeling that he could do naught to remedy the same, he bewept the loss of his wife bitterly for many days. Later on, however, he married again, and made a solemn vow that, as long as he lived, he would never again give lodging to a Ragusan: And thus, while he safeguarded himself from a second disaster, Tobia and Lella lived a merry life after their elopement:

MASUCCIO

WE may judge aright the ingenuity of the Ragusan by considering the nature of the trick which he put upon the good host, which in sooth was astute and strange and astonishing: Nevertheless, for the reason that he was at the time hotly inflamed with love, we must reserve a good part of our praises for Love himself, who, as his workings daily prove to us, has power not merely over human intelligences, but likewise extends his sway over the wild and untamed beasts: The yoke of love would indeed be most easy and pleasant if it were not that he is wont to mingle with his sweet delights the most bitter wormwood, in such wise that sometimes the joys which ill-starred

lovers have taken together have been brought to an end by a double and most cruel death, as I am about to show you clearly in the next novel.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-fifth

ARGUMENT

EUGENIA, BEING WITH CHILD BY A CERTAIN KNIGHT, FEARS THE WRATH OF HER BROTHERS, AND FEIGNS TO FALL SICK AND DIE OF THE PLAGUE. HER LOVER TAKES HER DISGUISED AS A YOUTH INTO LOMBARDY, WHERE, BEING ATTACKED BY THEIR FOES, THE LOVER IS SLAIN, AND THE LADY KILLS HERSELF ON HIS CORPSE.

TO THE EMINENT MESSER FRANCISCO BANDINI,
A NOBLE FLORENTINE *

EXORDIUM

AN onerous burden is this, most worthy Messer Francisco, which you have laid upon my weak shoulders, in that you have with no little kindness made me a sharer of your elegant gifts of scholarship from the first day of our acquaintance. And although I do not see that I possess any means or power of discharging this debt, either in whole or in part, nevertheless, so as to forbid my name to be written in the book of the ungrateful, I have, in searching through my slender hoard, put my hand upon a new sort of coin; without stamp, and compounded of base metal, and having turned this same to account in my present great emergency, I send it to you in exchange for your own most perfect money. If any profit should come to you therefrom accept it as at least an earnest of my exceeding great obligations towards you. Farewell.

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Messer Francesco Tomacello.

THE NARRATIVE

NOT long ago there lived in the framed and warlike city of Perugia a noble and stout-hearted knight-at-arms, comely in person, very worthy and gallant, who was called Virginio de Baglioni. He had for a long time nursed a hapless love for a winsome and very beautiful damsel of noble family named Eugenia, and she from day to day showed herself more and more cruel towards him. At last it happened that Virginio bore himself surpassingly well in a famous jousting match, in which he carried off all the honours from divers men of approved valour, and thereby broke and shivered in pieces the hard resistance which had hitherto possessed the cold heart of his beloved Eugenia, so that she not only gave herself likewise over to love, but took him into such high favour that this passion of hers outdid a thousandfold Virginio's old love and new love taken together. And when she let him know this thing with gladsome tokens and in discreet wise, that same thing happened to them which is often wont to happen to those who find their desires leading to a common end. Because she was yet a young girl, she was kept under very sharp watch by her brothers; but in spite of this she contrived, by her foresight and craft, to let her lover enjoy the first fruit of her virginity, to the great delight of both of them, and many a time they took their pleasure together without being ever blown upon by the blasts of evil fortune.

And because the accidents and the caprices of adverse fate are so great and so horrible—as those wretched ones who from the highest bliss have been cast down into the abyss of misery can bear witness—it happened, just at that time when the plague broke out in Perugia, that the ill-starred Eugenia found herself with child by Virginio, and although at first she had made trial of divers arts to keep herself from becoming pregnant, and afterwards to rid herself of her trouble, not one of these was of any avail, and on this account the two lovers were fain

to make an end of their lives: But that thing which tortured most bitterly the mind of the young girl was the necessity which lay upon her of flying from the plague in the company of her brothers to some spot where she would miss the care of old women experienced in such matters, who would know how to take charge of her and to restore her to health, and thus deliver her from the death she deserved—what though she rated death as little more than nothing, and dreaded only to die without a sight of her lover. When she perceived that her brothers had determined to quit the city forthwith, it occurred to her that, by the aid of her own wit and contrivance, she might take security against danger and death as well, and having told this same project to Virginio on the evening before the day when her brothers were minded to depart for the country, she feigned on the morning following to be stricken in the groin with the mark of the contagious disease. Whereupon, when they heard of this, her brothers straightway believed it to be true, fearing amain for themselves, and, being terrified in such wise that it seemed to each one as if he were himself wounded to death by this dreadful dart, they quickly fled from the city. They left behind them an old servant of the house, to whom they gave orders to attend to the needs of their sister, whether she lived or whether she died.

Eugenia perceived that her plan was faring prosperously, and after she had made trial of the old man left in charge of her by many and varied schemes and novel plans, she at last succeeded in bribing him by the means of money, to do and to say whatever her needs might demand; and having sent for her Virginio, who came to her straightway by stealth, they discussed with no little satisfaction the measures which they had already taken, and those which were still to be considered in order to bring the affair to a speedy issue, forasmuch as they feared not a little that the feigned attack of the plague might become a reality. So the old man let spread a report that Eugenia, whom her brothers had left sick behind them, was dead; and next, having compounded out of rags a thing shaped so that it might have been

taken for a human body, he buried the same in a church hard by, with a very small following and scanty light, for the reason that the nature of the disease did not admit of any great ceremony. Then Virginio, after he had disguised his ladylove as the page of a man-at-arms, took her to Città di Castello, whither he had sent forward his horses and attendants, and there, when her time was come, she was brought to bed of a fair male child. But, by the will of hostile Fortune, who had begun already to threaten them with every evil augury, their new-found joy after a few days was changed into the deepest grief through the death of their little son: Nevertheless they prudently composed their sorrow, and, as Virginio had already determined to enter the service of the Venetians, and had equipped himself excellently well with everything that was needful therefor, he mounted on horseback in company of his new page and went towards Lombardy, taking his train with him. By this time he had determined in his mind that, as long as he lived, he would keep Eugenia with him in a page's habit. When they had made their way out of Tuscany, and had passed through Romagna, now faring well and now ill, they arrived one evening at nightfall near Brescia; and, as Heaven and their cruel fate had already determined, it happened that, as the two ill-starred lovers were going on their way in gay humour, deeming they were by this time beyond all danger, they met the captain of a troop who was riding from the camp of the Signory, to join the army of the Duke of Milan: As soon as this fellow saw how well furnished was the man-at-arms before him with horses and weapons and attendants, and with baggage of all sorts, he determined to despoil him; whereupon he gave orders to his people to fall upon the stranger, and they, without waiting for any further command, went readily to work, knocking over now one servant and now another. After they had seized the horses and the baggage, and plundered everything they could find, they marked what a very fair youth the page was, and how a rose in May was not more lovely; wherefore they did not cause him to dismount like the rest, but seized his horse by the rein

and made as if they would take him into their troop. The unfortunate Virginio, who, almost dead with grief, had hitherto borne up against this calamity, and had more than once resolved to resist by force their attack so that he might be rid of his life along with his goods, although his striving single-handed against such numbers must needs have been in vain, deemed that if only the lady should be left to him the loss of all the rest would be as nothing. When, however, he saw that she was being separated from him, he, who was strong and lusty and now nerved with fresh courage through grief and love, made up his mind once for all to die like a brave knight. Although he had for accoutrements naught but his gauntlets and thigh-pieces and flankers, he took his sword in hand, and threw himself boldly into the midst of his assailants, and dealing a death-blow to the man who held the bridle of the lady's horse, and wounding divers others both in breast and back, he seemed like a fierce lion fallen upon a herd of cowardly cattle. But the leader of the company, who looked on these doings with no small disquiet, was filled with anger thereanent, and, foaming with rage at seeing one man thus put so many to the rout, he gave charge to two of his most trusty varlets to kill him at once. Whereupon they, each taking a spear, went forthwith behind him, and after striking him several times wounded him to death. The spear of one of them, driven by the impetus of the horse, pierced his back and came out more than a palm's breadth from his breast. His horse was killed by the other, whereupon he fell to the earth mortally wounded.

Eugenia, weeping and overcome with grief at the sight of him who loved her so fervently lying lifeless, resolved forthwith to die likewise, no less to carry out all that was due to their reciprocal love and to her own self, than to prevent her dainty person, in which her Virginio had taken such great delight, from ever being placed at the disposition of another man. Thus, without wavering at all in her resolution, she threw herself violently from her horse; and making as if she wished to embrace her lord, weeping the while, she seized the opportunity, before anyone could stay her, to throw her own soft white

taken for a human body, he buried the same in a church hard by, with a very small following and scanty light, for the reason that the nature of the disease did not admit of any great ceremony. Then Virginio, after he had disguised his ladylove as the page of a man-at-arms, took her to Città di Castello, whither he had sent forward his horses and attendants, and there, when her time was come, she was brought to bed of a fair male child. But, by the will of hostile Fortune, who had begun already to threaten them with every evil augury, their new-found joy after a few days was changed into the deepest grief through the death of their little son:

breast upon the point of the lance which stood out from the body of her hapless lover; and, letting herself fall in this wise, there was naught in the nature of things to prevent the projecting point of the weapon from piercing her delicate body. Thus embracing her lover, who was not yet dead, and clasping him close, she said: "Alas; my sweetest love! here is the wretched woman for whose sake a cruel and violent death has, against all justice, been dealt out to you: here is she who now comes of her own free will and without fear to be the sharer of your last calamity, in order that she, your own Eugenia, may never be put under the rule of another: here is she who, with her dying breath, beseeches you, by that love which possessed us equally while we lived, which our spirits will eternally give and take in that other world, that you will, at the same instant with myself, let your spirit wing its flight; so that, joined and bound together in this wise, our souls may in that dark kingdom bear true witness of our lasting and inseparable love both in life and in death." Then, with these and with many other pitiful words, they tenderly embraced one another and breathed their last at the same moment, their wretched bodies lying where they died without burial, and their bare bones giving to posterity a manifest sign of the bloody death they died:

MASUCCIO

WE may justly call Dame Fortune variable and inconstant, without saying any new thing, when we bear in mind all the histories there are, some prosperous, some ill-fated, some told, and some yet to tell; and the misfortunes just narrated of the love-stricken Perugians cannot of a surety be read or listened to without the deepest pity. But now, leaving these to the compassion of such as may themselves be victims to love, and following the plan I have laid down, I will now let you hear of a very strange and gamesome adventure, or rather a somewhat troublesome

mischance; which befell two men who were mightily intimate one with the other—an adventure which is all the more notable inasmuch as these two, what though they were rough, uncultivated fellows, knew how to make the best of the business without hurt to their friendship, or to the peace of their houses!

THE END OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-sixth

ARGUMENT

TWO MEN, NEIGHBOURS AND CLOSE FRIENDS, BY A STRANGE AND COMPLICATED ACCIDENT HAVE CARNAL KNOWLEDGE OF ONE ANOTHER'S WIVES. WHEN THEY BOTH LEARN THE NATURE OF THE THING THEY HAVE DONE, THEY AGREE TO HAVE IN COMMON THEIR WIVES AND ALL THEIR OTHER GOODS, IN ORDER THAT THEIR FRIENDSHIP MAY NOT BE DISTURBED, AND THUS THEY PASS THEIR LIVES PLEASANTLY IN PEACE AND QUIET.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MESSER UGOLOTTO FACINO, THE HIGHLY-HONOURED ORATOR
OF THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS DUKE
OF FERRARA

EXORDIUM

IF, when grieving over my evil Fortune; most worthy Messer Ugo lotto, I could find any remedy for my present needs, I should without ceasing make complaint to her for her treatment of me, because when I consider in my mind the vast number of honours, the many and sincere proofs of kindness I have received at your hands, most righteous sir, I can discover in myself no power which will enable me to do you any service, great or small, by way of recompense. Nevertheless, pressed as I am by this necessity, I must needs make use of the tasteless herbs which spring from my ill-cultivated garden, out of which I have compounded the medley salad I now send to you, river of eloquence as you are. And I furthermore beg you that you will deign to taste the same without expecting from me any more sumptuous fare; so that, should there remain on your

palate any pleasant flavour from the taste thereof, you may, wherever you may happen to be at the moment, recall the memory of your Masuccio. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

AT no great distance from this neighbourhood of ours there is situated a certain spot, one little known and less visited, which, though it is for the most part inhabited by people of gross and lumpish nature; numbered but a short time ago amongst its dwellers two young men, the one a miller called Augustino, and the other a cobbler Petruccio by name. Now betwixt these men, from their youth up, there had been knit together as great a friendliness and comradeship as ever existed between the truest friends. Likewise these two had each one of them married a wife, young and very comely, and between the women there was in like manner so great and constant familiarity and intimacy that they were rarely or ever to be seen the one without the other. Wherefore, passing their lives thus in a state of perfect friendship, it chanced one day that the cobbler, although his own wife was very fair to look upon, found the wife of his friend something more to his taste—longing per-adventure for a change of pasturage. It chanced that on a certain occasion an opportunity more favourable than usual of getting speech with her was granted to him; so in becoming manner he made known to her his passion and what he desired as well. As soon as Caterina, for so the miller's wife was named, understood the meaning of this request, she put on a little air of disdain and answered nothing thereto, although in sooth it was but little displeasing to her. But the first time she chanced to meet with Salvaggia, the wife of the cobbler, she let her know what amorous propositions Petruccio her husband had been making; whereupon Salvaggia, the cobbler's leavings, as it were, although mightily disturbed in temper at the story she heard, nevertheless kept her anger within bounds, and hit upon a plan by

which she might at the same time have vengeance upon her husband and keep intact the great friendship subsisting between herself and Caterina; so, after having made answer to her dear friend in many grateful words, she begged her to give a promise to Petruccio her husband that she would, on some particular night, wait for him to come to her in her bed, and that, in change for herself, she should let be in the bed the rascal's own wife. Then they would assuredly find great sport and pleasure in what would follow. The miller's wife, being very anxious to humour her friend, agreed to do what she asked; and the result was that in the course of a few days Petruccio, finding himself alone with Caterina, preferred to her the same request as before, using stronger persuasion than he had used on the former occasion. After listening to him, and giving him many and various denials (which forsooth seemed to have but little heart in them), she showed herself ready to do his will, so that the trick which had been planned might be duly brought to an issue. Then, having had a discussion with him as to the when, the where, and the how, the young woman said, "In sooth I can find no time fitting for such an affair save when my husband may happen to be busied some night over his work at the mill. Then I could very well let you come to me while I am abed." To this speech Petruccio made answer in very joyful wise, "I come just now from the mill, where there is so large a quantity of grain that two-thirds of the night will assuredly be spent in the grinding of the same." Hearing this, Caterina said, "So be it, in God's name. Come, then, between the second and the third hour of the night,* when I shall be awaiting you, and will leave open the door, as I am accustomed to leave it for my husband. Then, without saying a word of any sort, you must straightway get into bed. Tell me, however, by what means you will keep clear of your wife; for I fear her more than I fear death." To this Petruccio made answer, "I have already hatched a plan as to how I may borrow the ass of my good gossip the arch-priest; and will tell my wife that I am minded to go away into

* Between seven and eight in the evening.

the country." Then said she, "In sooth this plan of yours pleases me greatly."

As soon as they had made an end of their colloquy, Petruccio betook himself to the mill to get due assurance that his comrade had his hands full of business, and in the meantime Caterina gave to her friend full intelligence as to the plan which had been arranged. Petruccio, when he had ascertained that the miller was at work in the mill according to his wont, went back to his house, and making believe that he was vastly busied over his affairs, told his wife that he had a mind to go forthwith to Policastro in order to buy some leather for the workshop. The wife, who knew well enough whither he was really bound, said to him, "Go at once then;" but laughing to herself she said, "this time, forsooth, you will find you have bought leather of your own, instead of skin belonging to another man." Petruccio having made a show of departure, hid himself in a certain spot in the village, and there tarried, waiting till the expected hour should come. Caterina, as soon as the night had fallen, went to the house of Salvaggia, and, according to the plan settled between them, took up her abode there for the night; while Salvaggia went to Caterina's house, and having duly got into bed, waited with no little satisfaction the coming of her husband to that amorous battle which he so keenly desired, saying to herself many times that, after the business should be finished, she herself would have something to say.

Petruccio, when it seemed to him that the time was ripe, went with gentle steps towards his neighbour's house; but, just as he went about to enter therein, he saw that the miller was coming back home—the reason for his return being that the mill, for some cause which he could not determine, had broken down in such wise that during the present night no work whatever could be done. On account of this Petruccio was stricken with fear, and, mightily ill content with this accident, stole back to his own house without having been seen or heard by anybody, saying to himself the while that, though the business had miscarried this time, it should be duly despatched the next attempt. But because

there yet remained to be spent a good part of this night which had proved so unlucky to him, he began at first softly and then aloud to knock at the door, and to call out to his wife to open it and let him in. Caterina, perceiving who it was by the voice, not only refused to open to him, but furthermore, without answering a word, kept herself as quiet as a mouse, so as not to let him get wind of the plot that had been laid for him. Petruccio, being mightily perturbed at this, plied the door so vigorously that at last he gained entry thereby, and, having gone in, went straight to the bed; and then, becoming aware of the presence of the woman, who was pretending to be fast asleep, he shook her by the arm and awakened her. Believing all the while she was his wife, he compounded a fresh story to account for the fact that his journey had been abandoned, and, having taken off his clothes, he lay down beside her. And seeing that he had already prepared himself for action, he set himself now to consider whether, after he had been frustrated in his plan of tilling his neighbour's vineyard, he might not as well do a stroke of work in his own. Wherefore, deeming that of a surety he had fast hold of his Salvaggia, he took Caterina in his arms and gave her a valorous proof of his powers, which the poor woman bore with due show of pleasure and patience in order to make him believe that she was in sooth his wife.

In the meantime the miller, who had gone back wearily and with lagging steps to his house, and had laid himself down in bed in order to get some sleep, lay quite immovable without uttering a word. Salvaggia, being well assured that it was her husband who was with her, gave him a gladsome reception, keeping quite silent the while; and, after she had waited for some time without finding the lover in the way of giving any sign that he was disposed for the battle, began to handle him amorously in order that she might not be mocked and befooled in the business she had undertaken. The miller, believing that he was abed with his wife, although he felt more need of a good night's rest than any desire for skirmishing of this sort, when he felt her lustful bitings and dallyings was stirred to get to work, and duly

set going the mill which was not his own: Now when it appeared to the cobbler's neglected wife that the time had come for her to let forth the angry words she had prepared, she broke the silence and took him to task in these words: "Ah! deceitful rogue, disloyal dog that you are! Who was it you deemed you were holding in your arms, the wife of your best friend, in whose field you thought this night to spend your labour, for the sake of friendship, peradventure? Here indeed you have gone to work with far more spirit than is your wont, proving yourself to be a man of mettle, while at home you are ever short of breath. But, God be thanked, this time you have missed the prize you dreamt of, and all the same I will take good care that you smart for your sins." And with discourse like this, and with words still more injurious, she importuned him and demanded his answer.

The poor miller, although he was as one dumb-stricken when he learned the conditions of affairs, understood nevertheless clearly enough, as soon as he caught the meaning of her words, that the woman abed with him was no other than the wife of his good friend. However, divining exactly how the matter had come to pass, the pleasure which he had felt heretofore was quickly turned into sorrow; but, by dint of resolutely keeping silence, he withdrew himself from her side, and, for the reason that it was not daylight, he made his way with all speed to the spot where he deemed for certain he would find his own wife. Having arrived there and called for his friend, bidding him come down on account of a pressing matter, Petruccio went forth, albeit mightily distrustful, and him the miller at once addressed in these terms: "Good brother of mine, it comes from your fault alone that we both of us have suffered injury, and have been put to shame, and have met with a mishap of a sort which renders it more seemly on our part to keep silence than to speak, while there is assuredly no need to bring about a quarrel over the same."

Then, with no small chagrin, the miller set forth the whole story in due order to his friend, giving him full description as to how everything had happened; adding,

as his own judgment thereanent, that as Fortune had shown herself propitious to the cunning and malice of their wives, she had likewise shown no disposition to vent her spite upon themselves by letting happen anything which might bring to naught, or even lessen, their friendship, which had lasted so many years. He further went on to say that the mishap which had just befallen them through trickery might, through the rectification of the late lamentable error, be made to serve the common agreement and pleasure of all four of them, and that, as in times past they had possessed all their goods in common, so in the future they should likewise enjoy the possession of one another's wives. Petruccio, perceiving what was the wise determination of his good friend, and remembering that he himself had already taken his pleasure with the woman who was his special fancy, and that the whole affair was in a way to find an issue in goodwill and charity, came to the conclusion that it would be vastly more profitable to him to keep his friend, whom he might well have lost on account of this slip of his, than the mere esteem of the world (which as may be seen in this our time, sells itself as if it were a thing of little worth, or even barter itself away like goods of the basest sort). Wherefore, putting on a pleasant face, he affirmed that he was fully content with the plan which the miller had already formed in his mind for their common convenience and for the lasting peace and quiet of both their houses.

And thus, having called to Caterina and bidden her not to go away, they made it known to her that she was not the only one who had been tricked, and gave her directions to go and summon Salvaggia forthwith. And when they were once more all come together, they let it be clearly known what had been the consequence of the attempted fraud, and how great would prove to be the boon of peace and quiet agreed upon and established between them all by the happy alliance just concluded, which thing seemed to all present to be most excellent for many and divers reasons. Thus, from this time forward, neither in the matter of their wives, nor in the matter of their goods of any kind whatsoever;

was any distinction recognized between the two friends, and the agreement was carried out in such manner that the only parents the children knew for their very own were their mothers.

MASUCCIO

WITHOUT doubt there will be found some to hold up to derision the bargain concluded between these two friends in the fashion which I have just described—men who set greater store on their friendship than on their common honour. Nevertheless, I suspect that in the sight of those who may come after us (if Heaven should not in the meantime work vast changes), this aforesaid honour, which to-day is held in high esteem and lauded by virtuous folk alone, will come to such a pass that, overwhelmed with universal contempt, it will not only be held as a thing of no account, but will even be chased to the uttermost parts of the earth into a perpetual exile. However; this is an affair which I will leave to posterity, merely saying that if two other noble companions, concerning whom I am minded to write, had, while commending their loves to a certain gentle maiden, taken as an example the compact made between these two clownish country fellows, there would have not ensued such grievous strife, nor would so many people have died thereby, which things you shall hear of in the story I will now gladly relate to you.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-seventh

ARGUMENT

MARCHETTO AND LANZILAO, COMPANION KNIGHTS, BECOME ENAMOURED OF THE SAME LADY. THEY ENGAGE IN A COMBAT AND BOTH MEET THEIR DEATHS THEREFROM; WHEREUPON THE LADY, BY REASON OF THE GRIEF SHE SUFFERS, DIES OF HER OWN WILL. THERE IS UNIVERSAL MOURNING OVER THEIR FATE, AND ALL THREE ARE BURIED IN ONE GRAVE.

TO MY MOST COMELY ARIETE *

EXORDIUM

A PRISONER as I am in the bonds of our true friendship, my most comely Ariete, I desire to recall that friendship to mind as a thing untainted in these days when we are severed the one from the other, and to send to you, as to an especial friend, this novel; so that from reading the same, what though the event thereof be bitter and bloody, you in your spring of life may understand how great is the force of love, and how undisciplined and unbounded as well; and thus, when you shall have come to maturer years, you may know how to guard yourself as best you may, and with all prudence, against any such distressing accidents.

* In the later editions this novel is dedicated to Messer Francesco Tomacello,

THE NARRATIVE

IN the days when that invincible and most illustrious lord, Francesco Sforza, not yet advanced to the dukedom of Milan,* ruled over the March of Ancona, he numbered amongst his picked company of men-at-arms a certain one named Marchetto da Faenza, and another called Lanzilao da Vercelli, both of them marvellously courageous and gallant young men, and as virtuous, graceful, and accomplished as anyone could wish to see: And because they had been brought up in one another's company there arose between them a friendship so great and lasting that, as is often the case between soldiers, they became brothers both in life and in death. For so perfect was their love, that not only did they have their arms, their horses, and all their possessions in common, but it even seemed to each as if he held the soul of his comrade bound up with his own. Thus, abiding for several years in this happy state, and finding their honour, their fame, and their worldly goods ever on the increase, their union was reared on so firm a foundation of love and affection that neither the desire for rank, nor the greed of gain, nor ambition of fame or glory, would ever have prevailed in any degree to mar such friendship and fraternity if adverse Fortune, the mistress of all our affairs, had not entered their hearts by means of the snares and subtle ways of love; for, by letting kindle in the breasts of both of them the self-same fire of passion, and by the working of some new and most deadly poison, she overcame and levelled with the ground every defence which had been set up against her assaults.

It happened that a truce was declared between the armies which were fighting round the city of Fano, and during this time the Signor M. latesta proclaimed a tournament in Arimino, to which many knights of various degrees betook themselves, and amongst them the two brothers, Marchetto and Lanzilao, followed by a larger train of horses and apparel and squires than came with

* He became Duke of Milan in 1450.

any of the others: When these two entered the lists with the chosen number of competitors, so great and so valiant was their prowess that soon every one of the others left the lists, this one overthrown and that exhausted, and the two friends alone remained. Then they, not being minded to joust together, also went out, each one yielding to the other the victory. But, as it was discovered that Marchetto had broken a few more lances than Lanzilao, so was the prize and the honour awarded to the first-named, the one feeling no less pleasure and pride thereat than the other. And as they went to make merry at the palace of the Malatesta, it came to pass that during a dance the two friends fell in love with the same lady, a damsel very graceful and fair, and daughter of a noteworthy gentleman of the city; and each one, unobserved by the other, gazed at her in ardent worship. The damsel, who was called Ipolita, seeing how they were of the same age, and alike handsome and well-mannered, and how in divers other respects they were so equally matched that she, who was well advised in all this, knew not how to determine towards which of the two she should incline, found herself in such a state of uncertainty that she determined she should hold them both equally dear. Wherefore she would in secret favour now one and now the other, contenting them both with her kindness.

When the merrymaking had come to an end, to the great regret of the two knights, these two new lovers, taken and bound by the god against whose darts no foresight can give protection, went back to their lodging, and, having come there, Marchetto began to speak: "Brother, I came hither to win the prize, and now I have lost my liberty, forasmuch as I am so deeply enamoured of a damsel, whom for my woe I espied to-day at the festival, that I can find no rest whatever." Lanzilao, sighing no less ardently, replied: "Alas, O brother! I also have this day been bound in similar fetters by another maiden, the loveliest in the world." Then said Marchetto: "I marvel not at this, for the reason that we two, since we have known each other, have ever found our wishes jump together in all things; so now, meseems,

we are forced by the Fates that one should follow the other in yielding to love; and this should be all the more acceptable to us, for in such measure as one may have knowledge of the woes of the other, so in the same degree will he be able to condole with him in his sorrow. Nevertheless, I will not refrain from telling you that, if your lady excels mine in beauty, one may with truth affirm that she stands alone in this our age." Lanzilao, pleased mightily, answered, "To-morrow, when you shall see both of them, you shall give your judgment."

When the next day was come, and the sports once more set in order, the two friends were amongst the others who went merrily to see them, and all the people gave them great honour and kindly reception. There they soon espied their beloved in company of some other ladies, whereupon each one of them began to jest afresh, and Marchetto, having taken his friend by the arm in seemly fashion, pointed to her whom Lanzilao was about to single out at the same moment. As soon as Lanzilao saw her, and realized that Love had inflamed them in like manner with the self-same brand, his passionate heart was touched with the greatest sorrow and unrest; and, almost in tears, he said to his friend: "My Marchetto, this is she about whom I spake to you in such ardent wise, and if indeed you have at any time been minded to do me a pleasure, I beseech you now to hold off from this attempt. Admitting that victory may be doubtful for each one of us, yet meseems I am almost sure of winning her, because I have discovered the fervent love which she bears to me alone." Marchetto somewhat wrathfully made answer: "I cannot persuade myself, remembering how great has been the mutual love between us, that you can even think of making this dishonourable claim upon me, for you know how I told you yesterday that this lady, together with my heart, had robbed me of my liberty, and of a surety there is naught else to be said than that it is vain for you to love her unto death, unless you desire at the same time the death of your dear friend and brother and comrade. And what though I doubt not she may love you, still you may be well assured that she, having seen me

bear myself so valiantly, has let her fancy turn towards me in such wise that she loves and ever will love me more than her own self. And the end will show these words to be true."

Lanzilao, who had listened with little pleasure, answered, with his mind mightily perturbed at these last words: "If you deem that you have won her favour on account of your prowess, I surely cannot have lost it on this ground; for I, as you knew then, having jousted as valiantly as you yourself, was willing, out of courtesy, to let the prize rest with you, seeing that this honour was for us both. But be assured that I, for the reason that I was in better mettle than you, could have better borne the fatigue, and must have won the victory. This was plain to every man present, and indeed to every woman as well." Marchetto, now waxing hot over the affair, answered: "If you say that I won the prize because of your courtesy, you say what is not true; forasmuch as I, having jousted vastly better than you or any of the others, won it by my merit. Would to God that you had not withdrawn, so that I might have added you to the tale of those—more numerous than your own—whom I have already laid low." Lanzilao, now foaming with rage, cried out, "Wrangling in words seems to me a coward's trick; and, as I have settled with myself what I mean to do, I tell you once more that you must either give over the love of this lady, or our friendship. If you are still set on seeking her love, we will take our swords in hand and will give proof with all our strength which of us two loves her the most, or shall be best beloved of her." Then said Marchetto, "I looked for no other answer from you; wherefore hold yourself in readiness, for I will very speedily let you know in what wise and in what place we may have our meeting." Then, having withdrawn himself with the greatest fury, he made known to many men-at-arms what had come about, and likewise the cause thereof, and his companion having done the like, in a short time all Arimino was full of the story; and, although the lord of the city and divers of the condottieri and men-at-arms sought with diligence to make peace between them, the temper of the

lovers was so hotly angered that, each having challenged the other to combat, they got themselves in order to fight a duel to the death on horseback the following morning outside the city.

The father of the young lady—to whom news of the affair had already been brought—when he saw how comely and valorous and rich they both were, made up his mind to give his daughter in marriage, together with a good portion of his wealth, to whomsoever of the two might be the conqueror, and he moreover made known this resolve of his to the two lovers in the presence of divers ladies and gentlemen and of his daughter also. This news in itself was acceptable to them, and furthermore pricked each one on to do his best. Wherefore they both agreed thereto. Ipolita, holding them equally dear, as I have already stated, now saw that she could not look for the love and the victory of the one except death should be the portion of the other; so she awaited with intolerable torment the issue of the fight. The next morning each one of them, accompanied by divers men of mark, well mounted, and armed in fitting fashion for the arduous work to be done, took the field, not indeed merely to go a journey, and then there was given by a certain number of trumpet blasts, the signal for the beginning of the fierce duel, and for the keeping silent of all who stood around, under heavy penalty. When the final blast of battle had been blown, each champion, full of high courage, let go his horse for the encounter. Marchetto, standing up in his stirrups, smote his adversary through the vizor of his helmet in such fashion that a splinter of the broken lance, with the iron point thereof, stuck within, and going clean through his head hurled him dead to the ground. But Lanzilao, who had kept low his point, so as to first kill the horse and then without difficulty to overcome the dismounted rider by blows of his mace, wounded the steed of Marchetto in the breast in such wise that, like a bull smitten by the axe, it fell to the ground after raging now here, now there. And as poor Marchetto's ill fortune would have it, his sword came out of its scabbard while the horse was thus plunging about, and stuck with its hilt in the ground

and its point towards the horse's shoulder; and now in Marchetto's fall an unheard-of thing came to pass, for the point of the sword meeting the breastplate of his cuirass, and he in the impetus of his fall lighting heavily thereupon, it pierced his wretched body up the hilt, and he too died without a word.

The spectators forthwith ran some to one and some to the other, and having drawn them from under their horses, and stripped off their armour, found both of them, as it has been said, dead already; whereupon everyone, weeping and crying aloud, began to pour forth lamentations to God and to fate on account of this cruel and ruthless calamity. Ipolita meantime was standing with some other ladies watching from the city walls, and would gladly have brought back from death either one of her lovers at the cost of her own life. When she heard how they were both dead, stricken by grief in her heart, she forthwith determined that she would linger on earth no longer, and being set with great courage to let this thing quickly ensue, she cried: "Alas, Ipolita! how unhappy and wretched is your life, and to what a horrible pass has your evil lot brought you! On your account alone has this dreadful day dawned; you were the cause of this savage combat, of the death of these two gentlemen, and of the disruption of this long-lasting friendship and brotherhood. Alas for you, ill-starred lovers! broken now is the tie between your noble selves, vanished are all your virtues and deeds of prowess, and by the coming of bitter death are quenched your comeliness and all your gracious ways, even before there could be vouchsafed to you a single embrace by her who was your sole passion, and by whom, with all reason and justice you were equally beloved. Cursed be the hour when I was born, and cursed be that beauty of mine which won such high praise from you both, seeing that it was fated to be the cause of your death: I, afflicted and grief-stricken as I am, doubt not that your lovelorn souls are now wandering solitary through this our hemisphere awaiting my own, which, going in company with yours towards another world, must bear true witness as to which one of you is dearest to me: I forsooth will

quickly send it thither for the satisfying of so pious and seemly a wish."

Having thus spoken she seized the moment when the other ladies could not bar her way, and let herself fall head foremost from the top of the wall where she was standing, and as soon as she came to the ground she broke her neck and likewise shattered nearly every one of her delicate limbs. When this most cruel news was spread abroad the people all ran together, and when they found the gentle damsel a corpse and perceived the cause of her death, each heart was pierced with fresh grief and each one lamented with bitter tears over this cruel mischance. As soon as the bloody news was carried to her aged father, who because she was his only daughter gave to her alone all his love, he felt himself stricken with abiding sorrow. How many and how profound were the tears and the lamentations of the great lords and of the other nobles and of the people, of the citizens of the state and of strangers as well, it would be long to tell. Nevertheless, according to the will of the Signor Malatesta, the two bodies of the ill-starred lovers, with that of the damsel between them, were buried in a noble marble tomb upon which the occasion of their deaths was written in an inscription to their memory.

MASUCCIO

BITTER and cruel is the record of the fate of these lovers, perishing in such barbarous wise; forasmuch as in their life it was not granted to them to taste either the flower or the leaf or the fruit of love. Still I am fain to believe that their spirits as they took their flight found some comfort in the knowledge that their bodies would ever lie side by side. But although we must needs feel the greatest compassion for all three of them, I, being bound to pass on to some new pleantry, will leave the lamenting of them to others; and,

and its point towards the horse's shoulder; and now in Marchetto's fall an unheard-of thing came to pass, for the point of the sword meeting the breastplate of his cuirass, and he in the impetus of his fall lighting heavily thereupon, it pierced his wretched body up the hilt, and he too died without a word.

The spectators forthwith ran some to one and some to the other, and having drawn them from under their horses, and stripped off their armour, found both of them, as it has been said, dead already; whereupon everyone, weeping and crying aloud, began to pour forth lamentations to God and to fate on account of this cruel and ruthless calamity: Ipolita meantime was standing with some other ladies watching from the city walls, and would gladly have brought back from death either

remembering only the name of Marchetto, feel myself led on to write down the most diverting history of a certain other Marco, a fisherman, who himself conveyed in his boat a noble gentleman to have enjoyment of his own wife, and to tell of all the merry doings which ensued therefrom.

Novel the Thirty-eighth

ARGUMENT

ANTONIO MORO IS ENAMOURED OF THE WIFE OF A MARINER; AND BY MEANS OF A TRICK INDUCES THE HUSBAND HIMSELF TO TAKE HIM TO HAVE A MERRY TIME WITH THE WIFE. NEXT, HAVING BROUGHT HER ON BOARD A BARK, ANTONIO LETS THE HUSBAND HAVE HIS PLEASURE WITH HER, WITHOUT KNOWING WHO SHE MAY BE. THE HUSBAND AFTERWARDS PAYS FOR A FEAST; BUT THE THING HAVING BECOME PUBLICLY KNOWN, HE LEAVES THE PLACE THROUGH SHAME; WHEREUPON ANTONIO AND THE WIFE LEAD A PLEASANT LIFE TOGETHER WITHOUT CONCEALMENT.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT AND VERY EXCELLENT
MESSER ZORZI CONTARINO, COUNT OF
ZAFFO

EXORDIUM

MY most noble Messer Zorzi, forasmuch as Heaven and our adverse fate have forbidden us to taste for our common advantage the sweet fruits of our kindly and most delightful friendship—a pleasure which, methinks, was desired in equal degree by each one of us—I have resolved in a measure to repair this loss, and the method I shall use will be the sending to you of this very laughable story of mine. When you shall read the same in the easy and delightsome life of your most pleasant city, you may perchance find something therein to call to your memory your own Masuccio; and the unbroken friendship subsisting between us! Furthermore, if some transcript of this story should survive, your name will be held in remembrance by those who come after, albeit your rare qualities deserve a much higher reward.

THE NARRATIVE

IN the wondrous and most powerful city of Venice there lived a short time ago a gentleman of ancient and noble family, young, of good bearing, and of a merry humour, who was called by name Antonio Moro. Now he, while he abode here in the Kingdom,* held me in especial friendship, and, amongst our many other pleasant discourses, he told me the following story as something which in truth befell himself—a story which I propose to write down for your sake and in remembrance of your city, and to let it join the company of the rest I have written.

I will tell you, then, that this Antonio was one day taking his diversion with a certain good friend of his in a boat, as is your custom in Venice, and when the two were crossing from one canal to the other Antonio espied a fair and lovely young woman, the wife of a Sclavonian fisherman who was named Marco de Cursola, a fellow who many a time had gone as a sailor on board a great ship which had ploughed divers seas with Antonio for captain. Now the cavalier, being mightily pleased with her, resolved not to waste time over the business, and straightway sent an old woman, practised in such matters, and on friendly terms with Marco's wife, to have speech with her. And for the reason that the message was no less pleasing to her than had been the sender thereof when she had beheld him the day before, she answered, so as not to keep the messenger long in suspense, that she on her part was ready to do as Signor Antonio willed, but that it seemed to her it would be almost impossible to carry their purpose into effect, because her husband never let her pass a night alone; neither could she receive the cavalier in her house by day, because the neighbourhood was so thick with people that not even a bird could fly past unseen. Antonio, when he learned the bent of the young woman's wishes, deemed that the

* Orig., *nel Reame*, an expression commonly used for the kingdom of Naples.

difficulty of the task before him was greatly lessened, and at once set to work by means of a cunning trick to compass what was yet to be done. Having let the young woman be fully advised of all he was minded to do, he caused Marco to be called before him one day when he thought the time was ripe, and, after speaking him soft in his usual way, he besought him to bring his boat in the evening and take him to a certain spot where would be waiting a charming lady who had promised him the boon of her love.

Marco, who was very anxious to do Signor Antonio a favour, replied forthwith that he was ready to do the service required, and having thus settled matters he went his way. When it was night Marco cautiously locked the door on his wife and went to Antonio's house, and, as it was now time to start, they went on board the boat; and Marco, using his oar in the fashion of Venice rowed the cavalier as he had been directed to the canal beside which the old woman dwelt; indeed, the other side of her lodging looked upon another canal in which was situated Marco's hired house. Anyone wishing to go from the one to the other by water would have perforce to make a long course by going the round; whereas, taking the way by land through the old woman's house, and certain others the owners of which he had bribed, Antonio would be able to go thither easily and speedily: So when they had come to the place, he said, "My good Marco, wait for me here. I will be back in a short time." Then he entered the house of the old woman, and she, who was on the look-out for him, welcomed him gladly, and pointed out the way she had prepared for him. In a few minutes he came to the young woman's door, and this, albeit it was strongly barred, he soon opened with certain instruments handy for the purpose which he had with him. As soon as he found himself with the young woman, who had been awaiting him in high glee they enjoyed together the full and delicious ending of their amorous desires.

When they had made all plans necessary for their future diversion, Antonio returned to the boat by the same path, and there he found Marco asleep and quite

unsuspicious: As soon as the fellow had roused himself and had taken on board Signor Antonio, he turned the boat's prow homewards, and inquired whether Signor Antonio had fared as well as he desired. "Indeed I have fared mightily well," Antonio replied, "and I tell you, my good Marco, that I cannot call to mind the time when I have had so pleasant a bout with a lady; for, besides being young and fair, she was so vastly kind and gracious to me that I know not how I managed to tear myself away from her." Then said Marco: "I doubt not that you had a merry time in getting into port, and while I was waiting I stepped the mast more than once, although I did not spread the sail; for when I figured to myself the pleasure which my good signor was taking with his lady, I felt awaking within me my lustful appetite in such wise that I was within an ace of setting to work with my oar and going with all speed to take a taste of my own wife. Certes I would have done this had you not told me you were coming back; for had you returned and found me gone, nothingshort of a great scandal could have been the consequence."

Antonio, when he listened to these words—what though he was now out of danger—felt no small disquiet at the peril which he had so narrowly escaped, and at once began to consider some other method more diverting even than the one just described, by which he might provide against any such untoward accident in the future: So he said, with a laugh: "My good Marco, I knew not that you had a wife; otherwise I should have bade you go to her, and to come back to the appointed place in the course of an hour." Marco answered: "Did you not know that I only a short time ago took to wife a young and very comely girl?" Then said Antonio: "Indeed I knew it not; but wives, however fair they may be, must be reckoned as part of the regular furniture of the house, something to serve our pleasant uses whenever we may stand in need of the same; wherefore we must always be on the search if we should be fain for some fresh morsel. However, as the thing has thus come to pass this time, we must let it be as it is; but to-morrow evening I hope to bring away with me my ladylove in

the boat; as well as a certain companion of hers no less fair and gracious, who will of a surety prove a dainty treat for you." Marco, when he heard this, replied; mightily pleased thereanent, that he would not fail to greet the lady as a man of mettle should.

When Antonio was come to his own house, Marco left him there and went back to his lodging, and, having taken his wife in his arms, he did not forget to make up to her in full measure whatever her gallant had failed to give her through the haste and uncertainty of their foregathering. The next morning Antonio, after he had let the young woman have full intelligence of what he was minded to do in the evening, sent for Marco at the accustomed hour. Marco meantime had tricked out his boat with carpets and draperies of serge, making therewith an enclosed space at the prow in the shape of a tent. They embarked and set forth, and Antonio, having left Marco at the same spot and told him that he would be back in a trice with the ladies he had spoken of, went to the young woman's door, which he opened in his accustomed manner; and then, when he came into her presence, he spake to her of the danger they had lately incurred, telling her at the same time how he intended to guard against such peril in the future by the precautions of which he had already sent her word. Then, when she had attired herself in a silken garment which Antonio had given her the day before, and veiled her face in such wise that her husband could not possibly have known her, she went with Antonio towards the boat:

Marco, when he saw there was only one lady with his employer, asked where was she who had been promised to him; whereupon Antonio answered that, for certain good reasons, she had not been able to come, adding: "Nevertheless, I do not think of letting you come short to-night; for this one whom I have here will be enough and to spare for both of us, and so you will get your guerdon. When I shall have taken all I want there will still be left more than is needful for you; and, although I do not know your wife, I will be sworn this woman is no less fair and young and dainty than she." Then said

Marco: "I can believe that; but meseems it is not meet that I should in any wise lay hands on what is yours." Antonio answered: "I do not look at it thus. If it had not been my pleasure I should have not made offer of her to you, nor would you have presumed to take her; Wherefore get yourself in trim to do what I shall require of you; and for this boon I will ask you for nothing in return except the price of a fish dinner which I am minded to give to certain friends of mine next Saturday." But Marco was still loth to accept the invitation, albeit Antonio pressed him urgently thereto; but at last they agreed, and Marco promised to give the dinner as a payment for the use of what was his own already.

Then Marco having put out with the boat took up Signor Antonio's lute and began to strum a new tune thereon; and Antonio, having gone with the young woman into the tent, the two together performed to the sweet sound of the music many graceful measures in Trevisan fashion; and when they had taken their fill thereof, Antonio called Marco and said to him in a whisper, "Now take your turn with this pretty prize of ours; but, for the love you bear me, see that you attempt not to find out who she is, for she is of very honourable family, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I persuaded her to come here, even though I told her you were our Doge's nephew." Marco answered, "This matter is the last to trouble me, seeing that I shall not be called upon to marry her." Having thus spoken he went to her in high glee, finding her perfumed with all delicate odours, and taking heed of naught else, or of the fact that she received him with mighty little satisfaction, he did his work in real Slavonian fashion; and when he had rejoined Messer Antonio, he said, "I could not see her face, but as for the rest of her it seemed to me as if I must of a surety be with my own wife, for the flesh and the breath of both are exactly the same; in sooth I am now inclined to give you, not only that dinner of fish, but everything I can call my own." Then Antonio, hugely diverted thereanent, conveyed the young woman back to the place from which he had taken her, and the pair laughed so heartily at having made a cuck-

old of Marco, fool as he was,* that they found it hard work to stand upright. When they had settled between them all that was needful for their future enjoyment, Antonio went back to Marco, who was awaiting in a merry mood, and as soon as he had been conveyed to his house he let the boatman return to his wife, who, when he came in, feigned to be mightily disturbed at his long absence, nor was he able to appease her all that night.

On the very next Saturday Marco let prepare a fine dinner of fish in Antonio's house, and, as the last-named did not wish to play such a joke without companions to witness the same, he bade come certain of his friends, and having told them of the cheat, they all made merry over the dinner which had been prepared at Marco's expense. Then in the course of the feast they began to bandy divers jests, now speaking one by one and now all together, and they threw at poor Marco so many plain-spoken quips that he must certes have comprehended the meaning of the same even had he been one of the wooden-headed sort. And albeit this thing greatly displeased Antonio, who tried by signs and words to make them hold their peace, their merry humour was so greatly tickled by the comical nature of this jest that not even the Doge himself would have been able to impose silence upon them. Then Antonio, remarking that Marco was beginning to be incensed against his wife, having gathered the full meaning of the jests cast at him, forthwith sent a message to her warning her to withdraw from her house. And when Marco returned home and found her gone, he, overwhelmed with grief, went to live at Cursola, and the young woman, remaining with Antonio her lover, made good use of the spring-tide of her life.

* Orig., *che aveano Marco de montone fatto becco retornare.*

MASUCCIO

OF a surety the wiles and the subtle devices so quickly put in practice by lovers are very wonderful and of such a nature that, in my opinion, neither the precautions nor the sharpest watch kept by jealous husbands will ever avail to guard against them. And, if such be the case, meseems that everyone will have perforce to submit his wares to the favour of fortune; failing this, in taking a wife a man must needs bear in mind that proverb which clownish country doctors use when they sell their prescriptions one to another, and, taking them out of their sleeves at hazard, say to their patients, "God grant it may do you good, otherwise the grain must go to the grinding." But now, leaving the world as I find it, I will show you in the next place what great unhappiness love and fate together brought upon two poor young lovers:

THE END OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH NOVEL.

Novel the Thirty-ninth

ARGUMENT

SUSANNA LOVES JOANNI, AND FOR A SHORT TIME THEY ARE HAPPY TOGETHER. JOANNI IS CAPTURED BY MOORS, WHEREUPON THE LADY DISGUISED IN MALE ATTIRE GOES TO TUNIS, AND SELLS HERSELF IN ORDER TO RANSOM HER LOVER. HAVING RESCUED HIM, THEY FLY TOGETHER, BUT BY THE WORKING OF EVIL FORTUNE THEY ARE DRIVEN BACK INTO BARBARY AND ONCE MORE CAPTURED. JOANNI IS HANGED, AND SUSANNA HAVING BEEN RECOGNIZED TO BE A WOMAN SLAYS HERSELF.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS THE INFANTA
DONNA BEATRICE OF ARAGON *

EXORDIUM

IF there still abides amongst women of delicate nurture and prudent carriage aught of pity for the ill fortune and the terrible accidents which befall others, I will not hold back from telling to thee, most illustrious Infanta, who art so rare an example of all the virtues to other maidens, of the most piteous fate which overtook two ill-starred lovers, who, after wandering for a little space and with no great enjoyment in the kingdom of love, both perished—the one being overborne by a violent and cruel death, and the other having raised her hand against herself, desired to keep fellowship with her lover even in death. Read this story, therefore, O most lovely offspring of a royal race!

* Daughter of Ferdinand I. She married Mathias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and after his death in 1490, Ladislas, his successor, but this last marriage was annulled. She died in 1508.

in that gentle mind with which high-souled ladies are ever wont to receive the trifles which their hearty good servants offer to them; and, as you go on to read the same, I beg that you will let your pity go out to those who deserve it. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

ACCORDING to the account given to me by a noteworthy citizen of Gaeta, there lived in that city, shortly before the death of King Lanzilao, a goodly youth named Joanni da Piombino, who, albeit he was endowed with many virtues, remained still in the condition of a poor man through the assaults of adverse fortune. Nevertheless, being mightily expert in all matters appertaining to seafaring, as well as in the ways of traffic, he was employed by divers merchants, who were fain to place their affairs in his hands and to send him, now with one ship and now with another, into many and various regions, some anear and some afar. Now this man, although his fortunes were humble, had a mind set on the gentle life; wherefore he spent without grudge or reserve the whole of the little gain which came to him as the fruit of all his labour and trouble in acquiring politeness and making him of a seemly presence, for which reason and also on account of his praiseworthy carriage he won perforce the good will of all men.

Thus it happened that a young damsel of noble parentage, and very beautiful withal, became most ardently enamoured of this Joanni; and she, not being minded to confide in anyone for a long time, endured this passion of hers with no little pain. But at last, by certain means which love pointed out to her, she let Joanni know that he alone was master of her heart. Whereupon Joanni, being a prudent youth, took counsel with himself how he might as quickly as possible give satisfaction both to the damsel and to himself, deeming that it was, in spite of his many misadventures, most fortunate in that he had won the love of such a lady. With so great caution did both of them act that they found means of coming

together, albeit such a thing might well seem impossible, and they did not fail to give to one another the complete and delightful satisfaction of their desires. Although they abode but a brief time in this felicity, they managed their meetings with such great care that no one ever got inkling of their hidden love; and though, on account of their discretion, meeting was rarely forbidden them for any long space of time, nevertheless, either because of the excessive love between them, or because of some sinister foreboding, it happened that, whenever they parted, the one would water the face and the breast of the other with scalding tears.

On a certain day it came to pass that poor Joanni found himself obliged by his employers to convey certain merchandize in a vessel to Genoa—a thing which was little to the taste of the lady and still less to his own. So having bidden her a last farewell, he set out on his voyage; and, as they were passing not far from Ponza, the ship, being at the time becalmed, was attacked and captured by some Moorish galleys. The Moors, having carried off all the goods they could lay hands on, together with the prisoners, sank the ship and returned with their booty to Barbary, where the luckless Joanni was sold as a slave to a merchant of Tunis.

This terrible and bitter news was borne in time to Gaeta, and then how profound was the inward grief and the secret tears of the wretched young girl, only those women who have suffered from affliction as cruel as hers will be able to judge. Indeed, her sorrow smote her in a fashion so sharp and so intolerable that she would have deemed it a very trifling thing to have taken her life with her own hand; but at other times, when her grief had been somewhat assuaged, it would come into her mind that, if by the help of fortune Joanni should in the course of time be ransomed, or should by some other working of chance make his way back to Gaeta, and find her no longer living, her grief in the other world would be doubled, and she herself would be the undoubted cause of her lover's death. So by this faint hope she was held back from taking her own life; and, having been let know by the letters which came to the

merchant that her Joanni yet lived, albeit a captive in Tunis, she would, had she not been held back by dread of her family, have gone thither straightway of her own free will, and, without spending further thought over the business, not merely to see him but also to treat for his ransom seeing that she had not heard that anyone else was taking thought to secure his release. And while she abode thus possessed with this one desire, it came to pass that a contagious and most malignant fever broke out in the house where she dwelt, and attacked her own family in such wise that in a very brief time all the chief members thereof were dead of the malady and only she herself and a few little children left alive.

On this account, when she found that she was wellnigh alone in the world, and free also, she determined to carry out the project she had already formed; so, having disguised herself as a man and packed up in a couple of wallets certain little things of her own and two hundred golden florins, she went to Naples, where she found a Venetian ship bound for Tunis with a cargo of fruit: She engaged herself with the captain of this vessel as a servant, calling herself Raimo Ranco instead of Susanna: After she had landed in Tunis, she became in the course of a few days on very intimate terms with certain merchants of Genoa, having taken good heed meanwhile to keep secret her identity, and by various indirect ways she made inquiries about her Joanni. Thus she found out where and in what fashion he was living, and moreover she had sight of him in his miserable estate as he went about the city, laden with chains, and plying the calling of a porter. Although she was overborne with grief and pity when she beheld him, still she felt that in finding him alive and well she had found what was more acceptable to her than aught else in the world. When they had recognized one another in due and discreet manner, and had narrated all the adventures which had severally befallen them, shedding many bitter tears the while, Joanni, albeit he was overjoyed that his Susanna should thus have come to him, and proved thereby that her love for him outdid all other love, was nevertheless assailed by a proud and righteous feeling of unrest, and

felt no doubt at all that if the man she served should come to know her real condition he would want to use her as something else than a ship's servant. For this reason, and for divers others to boot, he besought her in tender wise that she would do as he wished, and return to Gaeta forthwith, assuring her that by God's help, and by his own foresight, together with the assistance he expected from his friends, there would soon be provided for him means of escape.

Susanna, when she had told him of the money she had with her, bade him be of good cheer, for she hoped soon to set him at liberty herself; and, as they could not now hold longer parley together, they parted, having settled between themselves in cautious wise as to how they should proceed with the project they had undertaken: Wherefore the damsel, so as not to lose any time, agreed through the negotiation of a Genoese merchant, one of the friends she had recently made, with the master of Joanni to ransom him for the sum of sixty doubloons; and when she went on board the ship to fetch her money, which she had hitherto kept for the sake of security in the cabin of her master the captain of the ship, she discovered that she had been robbed of her money, her baggage, and every other thing she possessed by a runaway sailor. Whereupon she, being grief-smitten almost to death, came near to cast herself into the sea, but after a little she began to consider that, failing herself, there was no one else who would do aught on her lover's behalf; so, as she was now alike bereft of all worldly goods and of hope as well, she finally determined, in that she loved him most fervently, to sell her own person into slavery and to redeem her Joanni with the profit she might gather thereby. Having gone back to the Genoese merchant, she told him with great lamentation and grief of this fresh mishap which had befallen her, and at the same time let him know what was the desperate project she was firmly set to carry out, putting together divers feigned stories to serve as a pretext to explain why she was stirred to practise such unheard-of liberality and affection towards this friend whom she had found in captivity. Then, after having debated

the business again and again, she caused herself to be sold by the agency of the merchant aforesaid to the king's treasurer for the sum of sixty doubloons, and the merchant, having received this money, made use of the same in benevolent fashion by purchasing freedom for Joanni.

When he was set at liberty, and was let know in what manner and for what reason the young woman had sold herself—when he learned, over and beyond this, where and in what condition she now was—his grief, bitter and unprecedented already, became doubly sharp and altogether intolerable; and, knowing quite well that no amount of treasure, however great, would avail to redeem her from the king's house, he, urged on by love and gratitude, and by the sense of loss of so dear an object, determined, even though he should suffer death a hundredfold, to endure it all rather than to leave his Susanna in slavery. And although he was sufficiently acquainted with all the landing-places and seacoasts of Tunis, nevertheless, knowing the country to be in very barbarous condition and every place vigilantly guarded, he could think of no means by which his design might possibly be brought to a successful issue. Nevertheless, like a man desperate and wishful for death, he agreed with certain other Christian captives, and they, working together by means unheard of before and seemingly impossible, contrived to store a bark with all things they required, and having fled with Susanna to a place some distance from Tunis, where they had left the vessel they had prepared, they quickly embarked therein; and, the sea and the wind being both favourable, they directed their course towards Sicily. Having fared prosperously through the night and the greater part of the next day, and having come to a spot only a few miles distant from Trapani, they found they were forced by their evil fortune to fight another severe and even mortal battle; for, after they had been cruelly stricken by the bursting of a whirlwind, they were violently driven hither and thither by the sea and the rough tramontano; so that, without being able to bring into play any skill in seamanship, they were driven back to the Mauri-

"Susanna a Captive."

FROM A PAINTING BY E. R. HUGHES.



tanian shores which they had lately left, and cast upon a sea-beach not far from Tunis. Thereupon, being recognized as fugitive Christians, they were seized and bound securely and conveyed back to the city.

When the circumstances of their flight and the fact that the slave had been carried off from the king's household became known, Joanni was forthwith hanged as a thief; and her master, having got Susanna once more into his keeping, determined to have her beaten naked with rods, as is their use with runaway slaves. But when she was stripped naked it was at once manifest that she was a woman, and the master, considering what had recently come to pass in connection with what he now saw before him, was mightily amazed, and after he had several times made inquiry of her in vain as to her condition, without desiring to give offence either to her honour or to her person, he led her before the king, who made privately a more strict examination of her, and induced her to tell him fully who she was, and who was this lover of hers who was now dead, and why she had come to Tunis to ransom him and had then taken to flight; whereupon she told him everything that had happened since the beginning of their love, shedding a flood of tears the while. And when she had told her story, to which the king gave ear with no little wonder, she resolved that she would of her own free will and with high courage go join her lover in death, while she stood in such illustrious presence. Thus, having snatched a knife from the belt of a certain Moor, she smote herself in the breast therewith, and in the presence of the king, and of the other Moors and Christians as well, she fell dead at the king's feet still calling upon the name of her Joanni.

MASUCCIO

WE cannot, certes, look upon the numerous and horrible misfortunes, with which these wretched lovers were afflicted, without feeling the deepest compassion; nevertheless it seems to me that now the time has come when it is meet for us to shake off

the remembrance of such great misery, and weep no more in this the fourth part of our book. In this last merry tale I will tell of a Catalonian trick which was put upon a poor jealous fellow, one in which my judgment outdoes in jocosity all those which have been told hitherto.

THE END OF THE THIRTY-NINTH NOVEL

Novel the Fortieth

ARGUMENT

GENEFRA, A CATALAN, BECOMES ENAMOURED OF A CERTAIN WOMAN, AND BECAUSE OF THE SLENDER WIT OF HER JEALOUS HUSBAND HE CARRIES OUT HIS PURPOSE. BY A VERY CUNNING TRICK HE INDUCES THE HUSBAND TO BRING HIS WIFE ON BOARD SHIP IN EXCHANGE FOR SOME OTHER PERSON, AND THEN HE TAKES HER AWAY INTO CATALONIA. THE HUSBAND FINDS OUT TOO LATE WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, AND IS LEFT TO MOURN THE ROGUERY OF CATALONIAN TRICKSTERS.

TO THE EXCELLENT SIGNOR JOANNI DE SANSEVERINO, COUNT OF TURSI *

EXORDIUM

MOST excellent and worthy lord, seeing that you have given me many and valid reasons why I ought to dedicate to you my special love and service, I feel constrained to proffer, with the best ability I possess, some small gift. This offering is a little basket poorly filled with certain writings of mine, unelaborated and just as they were set down—things which, meseems, will not be of much service to your present needs, but may, in the course of time, do duty as a lasting memorial of your most illustrious name, together with your other rare parts.

* He was one of the adherents to the conspiracy of the barons.

THE NARRATIVE

DURING the time when there was much shrewd fighting between Naples and the adjacent towns, it was the custom of the merchants of all nations to congregate in Salerno more than in any other part of the kingdom; and a very rich Catalan, named Pietro Genefra, having gone thither amongst the others, he carried on a mighty traffic both by sea and land, as is the custom of such folk. This man, being young and of an amorous temper, became acquainted with divers of our gentlefolk, and in time it came to pass that he fell hotly in love with a very beautiful young woman named Andriana, the wife of an Amalfitan silversmith, who, either on account of the exceeding beauty of his wife, or merely because he was an Amalfitan—people who are by nature mean-spirited when it chances that jealousy of its own accord strikes root—had of late become fiercely jealous of Andriana, although she had given him no cause therefor. Genefra knew well the suspicious humours of this man; and although the young woman had shown herself kindly disposed towards him, he, understanding what vigilant guard men of this temper are wont to keep, deemed that he must needs sail through these seas under contrary winds. Wherefore, having scraped acquaintanceship with the husband, who was named Cosmo, he employed him to execute divers trifling tasks in his handicraft, paying him overmuch for the same; and, besides this, he would very often give him certain Catalonian delicacies; whereupon the silversmith made a great ado over having won such a friend.

In the course of time the intimacy between them waxed so close that Cosmo, prompted either by affection or by doubt, besought his friend to be gossip, although his wife was not with child—a favour which Genefra joyfully granted; for it seemed to him that the husband himself, together with his own good fortune, had set to work to open for him the closely-barred way through which he might now walk with good show of

reason. Then, with seeming of faith and with a kiss, he gave him that sort of left-handed pledge which triflers are wont to use; whereupon Cosmo believed that the spiritual covenant between them was firmly ratified. This matter was in itself a reason why he should often at his own charges, set good cheer before his dear gossip. Therefore it happened in the course of a few days that the Catalan, having got his foot into the house, pushed his whole body therein after such a fashion that what followed fell out exactly to his liking. And although Cosmo was warned by some of our Salernitans—fellows who are little bent on minding their own business—that he should take good heed how he dealt with Catalans, he nevertheless, full of confidence in his good gossip and in his own foresight, made mock of all that the others said to him, and let the two lovers take their pleasure without any interference on his part.

In course of time it happened that Genefra was obliged to return to Catalonia on business of grave importance, and when he had made all his dispositions for the journey, he proposed, if Andriana should be consenting, to carry her off with him by a humorous trick—and somewhat dangerous also—in the ship which was about to sail from the port. He made clear to her his plan; whereupon she, a young woman of a roving mind and much enamoured of Genefra, needed but little persuasion, and, without taking farther thought of the matter, answered that she was quite ready to go away with him and to do his bidding in all things. Wherefore Genefra, having called to him his dear gossip, spake thus: "When I remember how great is the friendship between us, I cannot hold myself back from letting you know of all my needs, great and small alike. Would to God that I had spent with you and you only the time and the money which I have wasted with certain gentlemen of this place, but I hope that before long all my misadventures may be set right. What I would discuss with you, my gossip, is this. I, by the help of a gentleman, concerning whom I will speak to you later, have had great enjoyment with the wife of a certain seafaring man of this place, and, to tell the truth, I am become madly enam-

oured of her, no less on account of the undivided love she bears me than on account of her exceeding great beauty! And because, as you well know, I am forced by the will of God to go hence to-morrow evening, my heart will in no way suffer me to leave her here to become the spoil of others, more especially as she herself has told me without any disguise how a certain gentleman, a very dear friend of mine, has many times challenged her to an amorous bout with himself. For this reason I have determined in any case to take her away with me in the ship; and she being fully content with what I propose, I mean to try to carry out my design in such manner that I may not be interdicted from returning hither! And because the husband must needs be kept out of the house until the time when the ship will be ready to weigh anchor, I beg you that you will ask him, late to-morrow evening, to take you—paying him very liberally for his services—in his boat on board my ship, so that you and he may keep me company until the last hour of my tarrying. In the meantime I will send Galzarano, my servant, in such wise as I have already agreed with the wife, to bring her out to the ship, clad in male attire, in his boat. So we will go, the whole party of us, on board the ship, and afterwards you can return with Galzarano: I do not wish that all this service of yours should go unrewarded, for I intend on my return that your wife and my dear gossip shall be made glad by the present of a gown of the finest stuff which I will give her."

Cosmo, when he heard spoken these words so well composed and set in order, not only gave full credence to the same, but even began, before Genefra had come to the end of his lengthy discourse, thus to chide the behaviour of the gallants who had busied themselves over his affairs: "May you bring this matter, and even more untoward ones, to a good issue; for in sooth it is to me a marvel that these men have not plundered you, and done some injury to your person. I know too well what is the result of traffic with such as these, and I warn you how some of them, jealous and ill at ease on account of our friendship, have, under show of doing me a kindness, told me a thousand tales of your ill doings

and have even cast suspicion on my wife on account of our spiritual brotherhood; but I, who was not minded to lose my time, let them go on talking their trash. Now, to come back to the matter in hand, I am quite ready to serve you; for this mariner you speak of is a great friend of mine, and I will take him with me to the appointed place and in the manner you require; and, besides this, because we shall be all together, he will suspect, neither you nor me; nay, he will be firmly convinced that his wife must have eloped with someone else, foras much as she is in truth vain and light-minded in temper." After this discourse, each of the two, being content with what had been settled, went his way.

The following evening, when the ship had weighed anchor and when Genefra had let Andriana know all that had been done, the Catalan summoned his gossip when the hour had come and said, "Let us now go into your house, so that I may take leave of your wife, my gossip, and then we will go and carry out our scheme." Thereupon Cosmo took his friend by the hand with great delight, and went into the house; and, after a light meal and much pleasant talk, Genefra according to his promise handed over to Andriana twenty-five ducats, and took of her a pretended last farewell. Then Cosmo, turning to his wife, said, "Now embrace our dear gossip and give him a loving kiss, seeing that by God's mercy he leaves us without having let my honour suffer in the least through his conversation, for all that certain evil-minded folk have affirmed the contrary." Whereupon the two, who found it hard work to keep back their laughter, embraced one another; and, having said farewell, Genefra took his leave, and went with Cosmo to the shore. They found the man with his boat all ready, as Cosmo had arranged in the morning, and bade him await the coming of two servants with certain baggage, and then began to walk up and down on the beach. In the meantime Galzarano had gone with all speed to Cosmo's house; whereupon Andriana, having put on male attire, and wrapped herself in a mantle with a couple of wallets on her back, went forth to deceive the man who was planning all the while to put a

cheat upon his own comrade, and came to the landing-place. Then, as soon as all were on board, they dipped their oars in the water and rowed towards the ship.

Andriana, who had been slightly moved to pity at the sight of her husband speeding her on her way, all innocent of what he did, felt a little compassion for him, as is the way with young and tender women, and began to weep silently and to rail at Fortune, who had thus led her husband to such an untoward fate. On this account Cosmo, who was standing beside her, whispered, "Ah, you pretty rogue! who makes you weep? Perchance you grieve at the sight here of your husband whom you are leaving; and if this be so, you astonish me mightily, seeing that you are going to better your lot many a hundredfold. Let no doubts trouble you; for in lieu of being poor and ill-served, you will become the mistress of great riches. I well know how my good gossip loves you; wherefore be sure that he will make you the mistress of his person and of all his goods; for no men in all the world know so well as Catalans how to love and entertain fair ladies. And besides this, Fortune may be so kind to you as to let your husband die, and then of a surety my gossip will make you his wife." By heartening her in this fashion he banished at once the little regret that had possessed her light brain, and, in like manner as she had wept somewhat in thinking of these words and of him who spake them, so now, without making farther answer thereto, she began to laugh more lustily than she had ever laughed before.

By this time they had come to where the ship lay; and Genefra having embraced and kissed his dear gossip, went together with Andriana and his servant on board the ship, which had her sails set already, and forthwith they turned the prow seaward. Cosmo, as he went ashore with the boatman, was hugely diverted as he thought of the flout which had been put as he deemed upon his companion, and of what the fellow would say when he should return home and find there no wife to meet him. When they had come to land they set out for their several homes, each with mind at ease, and Cosmo, when he entered his house and found

his wife was not there, was informed by divers manifest signs of the issue to which the affair had come; so, all too late, he began to bewail himself, and the wicked woman, and that false knave of a gossip, spending much time in lamenting his stupidity.

MASUCCIO

ALTHOUGH Trifone the innkeeper, being an Amalfitan, was ingeniously tricked by the gentleman of Salerno,* and treated as an outlander in that he had to pay a toll for that piece of merchandize which he had brought into our city for his own particular use, there is no doubt that the flout put upon our good Cosmo was a greater and a more lasting wrong, forasmuch as all the goods he possessed, and for which he had become a broker, and had as a merchant contracted for and warehoused, were, at one stroke, taken away from him; nay, he even had to pay the charges of the boatman who took his property off to the ship. Wherefore, things standing thus, meseems that Amalfitan folk have little cause to speak well of our city; but because Cosmo himself confessed that he had been warned of his danger by certain Salernitans, he ought to lay the blame upon himself rather than upon others. Nevertheless, I think some excuse should be found for the poor wight, seeing that in his time the ways of the Catalans were not so notorious as they now are in this kingdom of ours. To-day, indeed, they are known and diligently examined in such a measure that, not only may everyone who is so minded have full cognizance of their ways, and be on his guard against them, but he may likewise put slight upon them to their shame and injury. Now I, having come to the end of my fourth part, will with God's pleasure set to work upon the next, which will be the last.

* See Novel XII.

HERE ENDS THE FOURTH PART.

PART THE FIFTH

Prologue

THE FOURTH PART OF THE NOVELLINO HAVING COME TO AN END, HERE BEGINS THE FIFTH AND LAST, WHICH WILL TREAT OF DIVERS NOTABLE DEEDS: THE HIGH MAGNIFICENCE OF GREAT PRINCES; AND OTHER ADVENTURES WHICH HAVE COME TO A HAPPY ISSUE.

MASUCCIO

HAVING now bidden farewell to that gloomy lake, filled full with other men's miseries, over which I have sailed in my ill-rigged boat, finding sighs for adverse winds and tears for heavy drops of rain, I am brought into port by my harsh and unjust Fortune, accompanied by the sad and unending train of homicides wrought by her. And, in sooth, if my pilot had not from time to time been heartened on by the breath of kindly Zephyr, no skill of seamanship would have availed to prevent the shipwreck which must needs have befallen me. However, now that I am brought hither by the favour of the Maker of us all, I have determined to leave tears, and lamentations, and the miseries springing from the workings of cruel Fortune, to those who are themselves sunk in misery; and in the fifth and last part of this Novellino—begun by me some long time ago and now wellnigh completed—I will tell

ten noteworthy tales of the extraordinary virtue and the high and mighty deeds wrought by certain great princes, and of other delightful matters, some of which will be pity-moving adventures brought at last to a joyful ending; letting these follow in the company of the novels already told, we will give a last God-speed to the book, and a brief repose to this wearied hand of mine.

But before I go any farther—leaving prudent folk on one side because they need not my counsel—I say to others, to whom Nature has been niggard in her gifts, that they should keep themselves well on their guard against the new art and industry—or I should rather say against the brazen impudence—which lovesick dames have learned to use, being taught by their own wickedness: For these are not content to let their overweening passion be made known by tokens many and varied, and by novel advertisement, and to send messages to their lovers—not merely within the city, but from one kingdom to another—bidding them come in person to essay the amorous duel, and bearing themselves in a fashion like that of lustful young lovers, who are prone in their importunate humours to send word to their sweethearts: And because I am afear'd that against such like dispositions of Heaven no human forethought can shelter us, I make offer and promise, before I write more, to all those who may be united to such women by marriage or by any other relationship, that if they will come to me, who am the unworthy secretary of my most serene lord, the Salernitan Prince, I will make to them a valid special grant—asking no payment therefor—by virtue of which they may, if they list, wear that crest which is only worn by right by the firstborn of the direct line of Sanseverino. Long live Love!

The general exordium of the fifth part being now ended, the details of the first Novel will begin, first the Argument, and then the Narrative.

Novel the Forty-first

ARGUMENT

TWO CAVALIERS OF FRANCE BECOME ENAMOURED OF TWO FLORENTINE SISTERS, BUT ARE FORCED TO RETURN HOME. ONE OF THE LADIES, WORKING JUDICIOUSLY BY MEANS OF A FALSE DIAMOND, CAUSES THEM BOTH TO RETURN TO FLORENCE; WHEREUPON THEY FIND ENJOYMENT OF THEIR LOVE, ALBEIT IN STRANGE FASHION.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT FRANCESCO GALIOTO *

EXORDIUM

MY most noble Galioto, if the hard rocks were moved by the sweet music of Amphion, what wonder is it that your Masuccio should be constrained by the most dulcet harmony of your lyre to fashion with his unskilful hand the following novel and to dedicate it to you as the one who furnished the theme for the same? I implore you, therefore, that you will not refuse to correct it as you read; so that, if as I doubt not you may find therein any straying from the truth or any rusty phrases, you may amend these in loving wise as our ancient friendship demands. Farewell.

* He was one of the Angevin nobles who joined the revolt against Ferdinand I., and followed John of Anjou back to France. See note to Novel L.

THE NARRATIVE

I WILL tell you, therefore, that in those days when Duke Ranier of Anjou* envious of the peace and quiet, as well as of the power and the wisdom of that divine prince, King Don Alfonso, was driven from Naples and from the Kingdom, it pleased him to tarry for a certain season in Florence. There were, amongst the other Frenchmen who were involved in the ruin and shipwreck of his fortunes, two valiant and accomplished cavaliers, the one named Filippo de Lincurto and the other Ciarlo d'Amboia. Now these two, although they were very prudent and endowed with many virtues, were inclined nevertheless, being young and given over to love, to leave the burden of disaster, and the cares thereof as well, to him who was especially concerned with the same, that is, to the duke.

It happened that in their daily rides through Florence Filippo fell deeply in love with a graceful and very lovely young lady of noble parentage, and wife to a citizen of repute; and while he strove incessantly to win her, it chanced that Ciarlo, as he ranged another part of the city, became enamoured of a sister of Filippo's ladylove, who abode unmarried in her father's house. He, unwitting of this kinship, made up his mind, albeit he deemed her passing fair, to keep his passion within sober limits, forasmuch as he was well versed in the strife of love and aware that young damsels are wont to love lightly and without constancy. Filippo, finding that his fair lady was discreet and of good understanding, and being also fully prepared to become her servant, resolved to give her his love entirely; on which account the lady, realizing his humour and considering his many and praiseworthy parts, likewise determined to recompense him with all the love of her heart, and began to favour him with her kindness in such wise that he saw she was the only woman in the world who knew how to

* Alfonso, assisted by Filippo Maria Visconti, finally expelled René from Naples in June, 1442.

love: She, certes, would have let him taste at once the supreme fruit of love had she not been restrained therefrom by the continual presence of her husband; so, having given Filippo assurance, both by letter and by messages, that she was firmly set in this purpose, the two lovers longed beyond aught else for the time when the husband would take his departure to Flanders in the galley which was now expected at any hour to touch at Pisa.

While they thus abode in pleasurable expectation, Duke Ranier was obliged to return to France, whereat both the cavaliers felt mightily aggrieved, and especially that one of the two who loved and likewise was loved in return; nevertheless, being bound by necessity, they took their departure, snared as they were in amorous toils. Filippo swore to his lady that no obstacle, however great, should debar him from returning, and that, come what might, he as a loyal lover would never forsake her. Having consoled her with other speeches yet more affectionate, he and his companion set forth; and after his return it came to pass in the course of time, either through some fresh fancy or through the cares of business, that Filippo, albeit he still remembered the lady left behind, let the ardent flames of his passion grow colder every day. He not only forgot his promise to return, but beyond this neglected to answer any of the many letters writ to him by the lady. On this account she, perceiving how she was wellnigh forsaken by this lover once so ardent, was stricken with such cruel grief thereanent that she almost lost her wits; but, calling to mind the stainless virtue of the cavalier, she could not persuade herself that so noble a heart could harbour such inhumanity. However, when she remembered his latest words, both written and sent to her by the mouth of their trusted messenger, she deliberated how she might by a new and suggestive plan stimulate the virtue of her lover and thereby make a final trial on behalf of her passion. Thus she caused to be made by a skilled master a ring of gold, wrought very finely, and in this she had set a counterfeit diamond, most manifestly false, letting engrave round the ring itself the words,

"*Lama sabachtani.*"* This, after she had wrapped it in fine cambric, she sent to her Filippo by a certain young man of Florence, who knew how things stood with her, and who was going to France after his own affairs, charging him that he should himself deliver it to Filippo with no farther words than these: "She who loves you and you only sends you this, and implores you to let her have a fitting answer thereto." In due time the envoy with his offering and his message arrived at Filippo's house and was joyfully received; but after the cavalier had marked with amazement what was the quality of the ring, and what the motto graven thereupon, he went about for several days pondering over the purport of the same, and finding himself unable to draw from it the true meaning, he determined to show it to Ciarlo and to divers other gentlemen of the court; but these, taken singularly and all together, what though they used all their wits, were unable to hit the mark. Finally its meaning was fathomed by Duke John,† who was a gentleman of great discretion, albeit more fortunate in advising others than in reaping victory in the many enterprises he undertook. What it said was this: "False diamond, why hast thou forsaken me?"

When Filippo heard this sentence he saw at once how the lady had most justly and prudently reproved him for his lover's unfaith, and began to consider how he might by a device of the same sort answer so graceful a proposition and repay so heavy a debt of love. So, being minded to conclude the matter, he went to his dear friend Ciarlo, beseeching him by the friendship there was between them, that he would go with him to Florence for the reason aforesaid. And albeit Ciarlo found this somewhat hard at first, he ended by consenting to oblige so dear a friend, deeming besides that he might peradventure thereby compass some pleasure for himself and for the damsel he loved. Thereupon they set forth, and having duly come to Florence, they began at the first chance

* St. Matthew, xxvii., 46.

† John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, son of King René. His father ceded Lorraine to him in 1453, and it was to him that the Angevin nobles offered the crown of Naples on Alfonso's death in 1458.

to walk past the houses of their ladies in order to signify their presence; and Filippo soon sent word by his wonted messenger to his lady how he had sufficiently understood the message which the ring sent by her had borne, and how he knew no other method of disproving her false opinion of him save by bearing witness for himself, wherefore it behoved her to grant him an interview meet for the occasion.

The gracious lady, who with her sister had rejoiced amain over the return of their lovers, and had deliberated what course should be taken, as soon as she heard this kindly message, so manifestly springing from love, was filled with such joy that she felt almost jealous of herself, and so as to lose no more time over the matter she sent back a brief answer to Filippo, bidding him wait with his companion before the door of her house the next evening. Wherefore Filippo, as soon as the hour had come, betook himself merrily with his friend Ciarlo to the spot which had been named, and there they caught sight of the lady, who gave them most gladsome reception. After she had made a trusty maidservant of hers open to them the door and bring them in, she likewise gave them to understand, by the mouth of this same woman, that the only way in which the thing she so much desired could be brought about would be that, while she should be taking her pleasure with Filippo; Messer Ciarlo should go and strip naked and lie down in the bed beside her husband, in order that, if by chance the husband should wake and feel Ciarlo in bed, he might believe that his wife was still there. Unless he should consent to do this, they would all run great peril of their honour and of their lives as well; wherefore she besought them to put in practice the timely stratagem which she had provided, or else withdraw from the place forthwith.

As soon as Ciarlo heard this request, what though he would have gone down to hell to serve his comrade, he was conscious that, even if the business should come to a fortunate issue, it would be to him a great loss of good fame were he to be found there stark naked; wherefore he refused altogether to go on such service in such

fashion, declaring, however, that if he might go clad and carrying his sword in his hand he would willingly do what they wanted. Now Filippo had travelled all the way from France to foregather with his ladylove, and, in considering the difficult pass to which they had come, he perceived that his friend was speaking and that the lady was acting with good show of reason; so, after many and divers arguments, for the reason that the lady remained firmly fixed in her purpose and that he himself was more than ever fired with amorous desire, he besought Ciarlo almost with tears that, by the bonds of friendship, he would consent to oblige them, what though the thing itself might be unseemly. Therefore Ciarlo, seeing how great was the passion which possessed his friend, and to what a pass the affair had come, determined that he would if need be meet death itself rather than be wanting in service to Filippo.

Thereupon the waiting-woman taking Ciarlo by the hand led him in the dark to the lady, and she, having given him kindly welcome, took him into her own chamber, and there bade him take off all his clothes and get into the bed, keeping his sword at hand. Then she softly bade him be of a good heart and have patience, for she would soon return and release him. This done she went full of joy to her Filippo, and having led him into another room they reaped the full and delightful fruit of their desire. Now when Ciarlo had waited, not two,* but four hours, he began to think that it was full time for the lady, or at least for his trusty comrade, to come and set him free; so, hearing no one coming, and perceiving that it was near daybreak, he said to himself, "If these others, all afire with love, feel no concern at having left me here to play a fool's part, it is now full time for me to take thought of myself and of my honour." Having softly got out of bed, him seeming that the lady's husband was asleep, he went with the sheet over his shoulders to try to escape, but was hugely annoyed at finding the chamber door securely locked outside; and, not knowing where the windows were, nor

* Orig., *Non che dove ore ma quattro aspettato*. The Salernitans use *dove* for *due*.

on what place they looked, he went back to the bed in a fury. He heard sounds which told him that the other occupant of the bed was awake and moving, and, though he was pricked both by fear and curiosity, he kept aloof and spake not a word. While he was thus troubled in mind he marked through the fissures of the windows that it was now broad day, and, fearing amain lest he should be espied by his bed-partner, he turned his back, and, gathering himself together and keeping his sword ready for his needs, he resolved to leave whatever might befall him to Fortune and kept still, mightily troubled in mind.

Before long he heard sounds of the fires being kindled throughout the house, and the hasty steps of the servants as they ran to fetch water; wherefore he determined at the last rather to die as beseemed a good cavalier than to be found there stark naked and making shift for a woman; so, having leapt out of bed with his drawn sword, he went to the door, and, as he was using all his force to open the same, he became aware how someone was unfastening it from without. He drew back somewhat, and then saw enter Filippo, laughing heartily and holding the lady by the hand. The two straightway began to embrace him in merry wise, albeit they saw he was bursting with rage. But when the lady perceived that he was all bemused, and unwitting where he was, she took him by the hand and said to him: "My good sir, by the sincere love I bear towards you, and also by that which you have towards certain others, I will assure myself that I may speak to you concerning a matter which intimacy such as ours will allow us to discuss. I know not whether Nature may have failed to bestow upon you French gentlemen that which she always gives to the lower animals. I mean to say that I know of no male beast, whether wild or tame, which, when under the sway of love, will not recognize the female by her odour. And you, forsooth, a wise and discreet gentleman, who have come hither all the way from France on account of love, can it be that your frozen nature is so sluggish that, when Fortune lets you spend the whole of a long night by the side of her for whom



"Manc Venit Consilium."

FROM A PAINTING BY S. S. HUGHES



you have shown such great tokens of love, you failed to scent out who she was?" Then, having led him up to the bedside, she let him see and know clearly that it was her sister and no one else who had lain beside him during the night which was just passed.

When he perceived this thing the cavalier was not a little ashamed of himself, but finally all four laughed and joked so merrily that they could scarce stand upright on their feet; and because of the pass to which things had come, it seemed meet to all, that, for the setting right of the fault aforesaid, they should once more divide in pairs. Whereupon Ciarlo, having got into bed, plucked the fresh flower and the earliest fruit of the goodly garden which fell to his lot, and the two friends remained there, each taking delight with his own lady, until the husband came back from western parts.

MASUCCIO

IF we should give all deserving praise to the noteworthy device of the false diamond planned by the lady, we ought surely to find no less pleasure in hearing of the curious jest she put upon Ciarlo—the like of which was never played before—as well as of the travail of mind and the many anxious thoughts and fears which vexed him all that long night. But since this adventure came to a joyful issue, the only part of the same we need consider hereafter is that one which is concerned with the fate reserved for those women who are wont to importune men. And thus going on to deduce an argument from this theme, I will let follow next in order the story of a barbarous, cruel, and libidinous adventure of a certain Queen of Poland—an adventure which ended happily for all concerned therein except the queen aforesaid.

THE END OF THE FORTY-FIRST NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-second

ARGUMENT

THE QUEEN OF POLAND SENDS AWAY A SON OF HERS IN ORDER THAT HE MAY BE SLAIN, AND THEN, HAVING BECOME PREGNANT BY ONE OF HER ATTENDANT KNIGHTS, GIVES BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER. BY DIVERS CHANCES THE SON ESCAPES DEATH, AND, BEING ADVISED OF HIS MOTHER'S DOINGS, KILLS HER, AND ON BECOMING KING TAKES TO WIFE THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF HUNGARY.

TO THE VERY EXCELLENT AND WORTHY LORD;
DON FERRANDO DE GIVARA, COUNT
OF BELCASTRO

EXORDIUM

MOST magnanimous cavalier of Castile, seeing that I have for many years had knowledge of your perfect virtue, and perceived that it in no wise falls short of the worthiness of your lineage, I, having already determined to inscribe to you one of my novels, was not minded to send to you aught else than what might deal with lofty themes and the deeds of great princes, in order that you, when you should read my story, might understand how the venturesome daring which women in these days employ in sending to summon their lovers has already been used and put into practice in kingdoms other than our own, by ladies who have proved themselves the greatest mistresses of the art. Likewise I would let you see that the means they employed differed greatly from those in favour with our Italian women, in that the ultramontane ladies employ force when art fails them, as you, my excellent Count, will be mightily astonished to learn. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

GERONIMO, King of Poland, according to the report given to me by divers Poles, was in his day a most wise and prudent gentleman, and he, having been left without wife or child, determined to wive once more, albeit he was now drawing anigh to the season of old age, so as not to let pass the kingdom to a strange nation after his death. Wherefore he took to wife the sister of the Frankish King of Bosnia, who was young and very fair, and, having given her reception with royal pomp and found her delightsome beyond measure, he began to love her more than his own life. But the queen, dissatisfied perchance with the lot Fate had awarded her, set herself with much persistence to seek how she might enjoy the goods of others; and, having cast her eyes upon a handsome cavalier about the court, she, being unwilling to speak of the affair to any other person, called him into her chamber one day, and in very feat manner pressed him to consent to her dissolute desires, saying to him: "The love I bear you ought to be to you a very precious thing, for it is your duty to consider who I am and with what eager desire I now address you; and, although this thing is an arduous enterprise for you to essay, you must remember that I am placed in no less peril, and that Love is a mighty sovereign whose forces no mortal has ever been able to resist. And although I might now remind you of many examples of this same thing, I must bid you be content with one only, and bring to an issue this affair concerning which I have laid my commands upon you. I will speak to you therefore of the mighty Hercules, who, after he had slain Cerberus and flayed the lion for Love's sake, learned to spin wool. I will say naught of Theseus, who, having abandoned his Ariadne, gave himself over entirely to Phaedra, and cared naught for the fate of Hippolytus. These ensamples, most true and unquestionable, ought to serve the purpose which I have in view, that is, to stir you up to give satisfaction to my longings and to my love-stricken heart, which is pining

through desire of you; and of a surety, if you deny my prayer, you will yourself be the cause of my death, and afterwards, when you shall vainly seek a remedy for the same, you will be grief-stricken for having hunted me from this world by your cruelty. Wherefore come to my succour while there is yet time." And having thus spoken she was silent.

The cavalier, who was a very worthy gentleman, was conscious that if he should do such a wicked deed he would affront the honour and strike at the very life of the king his master; wherefore he made answer to the queen, after he had uttered divers words of honest censure, and spake thus: "With what show of honour and with what demeanour could I set myself to work such an unspeakable sin? You are the very crown and headpiece of my lord the king, to whom my faithful service is due, bound as I am thereto by the laws of nature. What death, however cruel, what torture too fell to name, would be adequate to my offence should I transgress against His Majesty in a fashion which men might well call base beyond measure, in that my lord, should he ever come to know of my crime, would, sooner than suffer such infamy, prefer to stand in the place of the lowest varlet in his scullery; nay rather—more cruel fate—would elect to die by his own hand? Therefore, O illustrious queen, keep back your feet from this false step, and have no fear that this thing will ever come by speech of mine to the hearing of others. Nay, now that I have locked the same in my heart, I will ever hereafter keep silence thereanent, and will deem you as one far above me in all things. If perchance you desire to exile me hence, declare it to me now, and I will betake myself to some wild spot in which I may be forced to make wild herbs my meat, and there I will abide, and seek no more to behold the faces of men. And now I will end my speech, with my mind verily and indeed set rather to suffer a thousand deaths than ever to wander in such wise from the paths of righteousness."

The queen, highly angered at these words, cried out: "See now, Misser Demitrio, that you set yourself in

order to satisfy my desires, and, as I am now with child by the king, I promise you by my faith that, when my labour shall be over, I will let the child, be it a boy or a girl, perish forthwith, and when I shall be with child by you—a thing which I doubt not will come to pass—I promise you that no other man but you shall ever enjoy my person or my goods as long as I shall live, and I will make the child which may be born to us the heir, even as though he had come from the king's loins. He shall be carefully brought up, and he shall succeed without fail to this our kingdom. But should you still be obstinate in your refusal, make up your mind to go hence forthwith, and see that no tidings of you come to my hearing; otherwise I swear to you that I will let befall you a shameful death, go where you will." The cavalier was mightily alarmed by these direful threats, and at the same time drawn on by the promises of present and future rewards, and inflamed by the beauty of so lofty a lady; wherefore he determined, after hastily canvassing the matter with himself, to obey the queen's commands. And thus, before they had let abate within themselves lustful humour, we may presume that they plucked the amorous fruits of love, and that hereafter they gave each other much delight whenever fortune was favourable to them. And in due time it came to pass that the queen gave birth to a very fair boy; whereupon the king and the barons of the land; and all the people as well, held high rejoicing, and the child was baptized by the name of Adrian. Then the wicked queen, although being a mother she was deeply grieved to the heart that she must perforce carry out the promise she had made to slay her child, nevertheless, so as not to give aught of offence to her paramour, who had captured her fancy so completely that she was now more than ever entangled in the snares of her amorous, or rather of her adulterous passion, she determined in part to bring to an issue the cruel and detestable thing she had promised.

By chance there had come in those days to her husband's court a certain knight of Hungary, together with his wife and children, who had been banished on account

of some angry humour of the King of Hungary; and the queen, when she heard that the wife of the Hungarian had also recently given birth to a very handsome boy, took it into mind that this woman alone would be able to aid her in carrying out the scheme she had planned. Having bidden them summon the lady to her, she said after she had given to her a kindly reception: "My dear Costanza, you, like a prudent woman, will readily understand, when you shall have heard what I have to tell you, how great is the importance of the matter I have in hand, and of what nature, and how urgently it will behove you to keep the same a secret. Therefore I beseech you, by the only true God and by the benefits which you have received from me already, and by the many others still greater which you may expect in the future, that you will be ready to carry out my wishes for the sake of the reward which will come to you thereby. When this thing shall be done, let it pass away in silence, for you yourself shall judge how pressingly silence will be necessary therefor." To this speech Costanza answered with all humility that, albeit she was unworthy of the queen's high confidence, still she was ready in all ways to carry out her wishes, and would sooner die than reveal to any living person aught which the queen might tell her.

Then said the queen: "It is necessary for certain reasons which sway me, not without ample cause—reasons which I cannot at present reveal to you—that I should give in exchange for your child the son which has lately been born to the king and myself; and, if this exchange should be made, you may be sure that your son will duly succeed to this kingdom. What fate I desire for my own child I cannot tell you, seeing that I am a mother and you a prudent woman; but you may form what conclusion you list thereanent. In this matter, however, I leave my wishes to be ruled by your forethought." Costanza, a fugitive in a strange land and sunk in poverty, albeit many and varied thoughts passed through her mind as she listened to such an extraordinary proposal, made answer forthwith that she was ready to fulfil all the queen's wishes, bearing in mind the present

advantage to herself and the future welfare of her son. After she had returned home and taken counsel with her husband, they both, for the reasons aforesaid, resolved to let the matter come to an issue straightway. Thus, when she had carried her child into the queen's chamber, and changed its wrapping and other clothes for those of the queen's son, the barter agreed between the two was completed. Alas, perverse Fortune, who is it can arrest your rapid and perilous wheel! Alas, For-

advantage to herself and the future welfare of her son. After she had returned home and taken counsel with her husband, they both, for the reasons aforesaid, resolved to let the matter come to an issue straightway. Thus, when she had carried her child into the queen's chamber, and changed its wrapping and other clothes for those of the queen's son, the barter agreed between the two was completed. Alas, perverse Fortune, who is it can arrest your rapid and perilous wheel! Alas, Fortune, what though great princes may deny your existence, and banish you from their presence, you still let them feel the touch of your vengeance, although tardy be the working of your wrath! To you it was no secret what would be the issue of this plot. Costanza's mind was bent on one object, the queen's upon another. Costanza, desiring only to let her son become a king, beheld not the death which was swooping down so quickly upon her innocent offspring; and the queen as yet had no inkling that aught of craft was stirring in the mind of the humble foster-mother of her child; for Costanza, being a mother herself, cared for the strange child as if he had been her own son. Now let him who has understanding consider well this matter.

Costanza, taking with her the queen's fair child clad in mean garments, returned to her humble lodging, and left her own child in the high estate which he was fated to enjoy for so brief a season; and, although she had understood well enough what the wicked queen desired in her inmost heart, to wit, that Adrian should taste no drop of milk either from her own or from any other breast, nevertheless, considering well the malignant nature of this cruel mother and the innocence of the poor babe, and being likewise moved thereto by conscience, she determined, though she might perish therefor, to bring up the boy carefully as her own; and, after she had made the queen believe that he was indeed dead, she kept him secretly in her own house. The wicked queen, who was beating against contrary winds, did not suffer the child of poor Costanza to enjoy a month of life before she took his life by violence, feigning the while to be sore stricken with grief at his death, and

saying to the king and the court, and to Costanza likewise, that this thing had come about in the way of nature. Whereupon all the aforesaid were grievously affected by this bitter misfortune.

Now Misser Demitrio, deeming surely that the dead child was the one lately born of the queen, what though the deed wrought by her pleased him not a little, held it for certain that the queen must surpass in cruelty all the wicked women in the world, and was filled with no little wonder thereanent; but neither this deed nor any other consideration availed aught to hold him back from the work he had begun—a work to which both he and the queen fell with great delight. Wherefore in due course the queen found herself with child by him, and at the end of her time gave birth to a fine daughter, whom the king claimed as his own, making great show of joy over her birth. Now Costanza, who with her husband had wept bitterly in secret over the death of the child, tasting an anguish never felt before, had by this time ascertained clearly the nature of the intimacy and favour of the queen with the cavalier her lover, and that the issue of the same manifestly transgressed the limits of honesty and duty; so Costanza gathered up mentally each detail of the business point by point, exactly as it had happened, and just as though she herself had been concerned in every one. Being overcome with grief and shame in consideration of such huge and nefarious wickedness, she found no peace for her soul, and as it happened that her husband, through the intercession of the King of Poland, regained the favour of his sovereign, they returned to Hungary a few days after their son's death, taking with them their other children, and in strict concealment Adrian, who was held by them as dear as if he had been their own flesh, and was brought up with the greatest care. Having returned home they were met with kindly reception and affectionate marks of esteem by all the chief nobles; and while Costanza went day by day to visit the Queen of Hungary, being received by her most joyfully, it came to pass that the nurse of the queen's son, a lovely boy about the age of Adrian, fell ill in such wise that

she could no longer suckle him: Wherefore the queen, who loved her child very dearly, sent word to divers ladies bidding them lend her their aid in this strait. But—perhaps decreed thus by Heaven—the child refused to taste the milk of any one of them, save of Costanza alone, and this he relished as well as that of his nurse. Wherefore the queen was pleased beyond measure, and begged Costanza tenderly that, until the child could be otherwise provided for, she would be pleased to nurse him, a task which Costanza joyfully undertook. Then the queen forthwith let prepare a room for her and her family in the palace, in which she nursed both the children with the greatest love and carefulness. But as Fortune was not minded that she should, thus working the weal of others, live on with such a fair and noble pair of children, it was brought about that on a certain night, when she was lying betwixt the two, she, being overcome by overpowering weariness, fell asleep on the top of the child of the King of Hungary, and pressed upon him in such wise that when she awoke she found him dead by her side. Stricken with almost mortal grief—as any one may well believe—she bewept him for a long time; and then, finding that tears would not help her, and seeking to compass her own safety, she took her beloved Adrian, who resembled mightily the other, and dressed him in the clothes of the dead child. Then she and her husband buried the queen's son without being seen by anybody, and the next morning she showed the living one, as was her wont, to the queen, and neither she, nor anyone else about the court, perceived that this was not the son of the king.

Costanza, having become more careful after this misfortune, brought up her Adrian with twice as great love as heretofore, and when he was come to man's estate he grew to be the universal ensample of worth and comeliness to all the Hungarians. In the meantime, the Queen of Poland, who had been left a widow a short time after the unheard-of barter she had made of her infant, lived with the fair child of her unlawful love, and, as there had never been born to her another child, either by her lover or by anyone else, she made offer

to this exchanged and re-exchanged son of the King of Hungary—albeit she deemed him to be the second born—to give him her daughter to wife and her kingdom for a dowry. And having conceived this idea, she sent her most reverend ambassadors to bear this request to the King of Hungary, and after some negotiations the match was agreed upon. When the time had come for the celebration of the marriage and the feasts, the king put everything in order in most sumptuous fashion; and when the bridegroom, together with Costanza and her husband, had set forth on their way and had entered the kingdom of Poland, it seemed to Costanza that the time had come when she should rescue her beloved foster-child from the commission of the execrable offence towards which, in his innocence, he was tending with so much delight in his heart the while. Whereupon she and her husband secretly called him aside, and, after a fitting and seemly prelude, laid bare to him the whole story, telling him whose son he really was, and how and why he had been brought up by Costanza, and by what working he had been held to be the son of the King of Hungary. Furthermore, Costanza let him know concerning all those things which, as she had got clearly to know, had passed between his own mother and the cavalier, and then told him point by point of everything which had ensued thereupon.

Adrian, who was now called by the name of Edward; having heard these words with the greatest sorrow and amazement, felt that he could never be able by mere words to reward his beloved nurse for her goodness, and made up his mind to give her a suitable guerdon in deeds in such wise that, both in the present and in the future, men might praise him for his gratitude. Although he was endowed with an understanding much more complete than might have been expected in one so young, he nevertheless took counsel with Costanza and her husband, and resolutely determined to carry out the plan which he had formed. When he had come to his destination he was received and welcomed by the Queen of Poland, and by her barons and people, with the most sumptuous rejoicings, and all the honour due to so

great a prince. Next morning the mass was celebrated with due pomp, and he was married and took to wife the daughter of his own mother. But when the hour for the consummation of the marriage approached the new king artfully made believe to be affected by a bodily distemper of such a nature that, by the counsel of his physicians, the nuptial rite was deferred until such time as his health should be amended. In the meantime he took peaceful and entire possession of the kingdom and of his estates, and having received the homage of the barons and of all the people, and confirmed his power in such wise that he need fear no man, he one night caused his mother and Misser Demitrio to be privily seized. Then, after they had been put to the question by means of divers very cruel tortures, they each of them made confession how the matter had been brought to pass from beginning to end.

When he had caused this confession to be ratified by both the accused in the presence of all the people, he let follow a legal and valid trial, in which he produced the depositions of Costanza and her husband, and then sent a copy of these to all Christian princes for the clearing of his honour. On the following morning he bade them burn his wicked mother and the disloyal cavalier, as was their due, at the same stake, and he had his sister shorn of her hair and kept closely in a convent as long as she lived, albeit she was innocent of offence. Having done this, he despatched to the King of Hungary two of his chief nobles to advise him more particularly concerning what had happened, and likewise to tell the king how he, knowing full well that he enjoyed both his life and his estate only through the favour of his majesty, was willing that these should be disposed of according to the king's desire, as had been proposed when the king, deeming the boy to be his own son, had put him in the way of attaining so fine a fortune. The King of Hungary, who had already heard with mighty great astonishment and small pleasure of what had come to pass, considered well the strange news, and, being a very wise man, it occurred to him that, as he had lost the King of Poland as a son, he might gain

him as a son-in-law, seeing that he had a daughter who was exceedingly fair. Wherefore, by common consent and mutual desire, he gave to Adrian the princess to wife, and she was duly welcomed by him with high festivals and regal solemnities. To Costanza and her husband he granted a good estate and took them into his closest confidence; and thus in peace and quietness, with the greatest love subsisting between them and their beautiful children, the King and Queen of Poland lived by the grace of God for many years, to the great contentment of all the people.

MASUCCIO

HOW mighty is the worth and the holiness and the perfection of truth, and how neither vice nor wickedness can ever have power either to wound it or to deface it, or in any wise to fill its place, seeing that in the end it will still never fail to rise supreme, aided either by divine or human working, or by its own intrinsic virtue, passing through the troubled waters without ever wetting her skirts or even her feet—all this, I say, may be proved by the clearest testimony in considering the adventures, lately told by me, which happened to our Adrian and his mother and his nurse. But now, leaving the new king to his joyful life with his young spouse, I—bearing in mind only that part of the story in which the son delivered the mother over to death—am moved to let follow another novel, full of pity and very worthy to be told, concerning one of our gentlemen of Salerno, who with justice doomed his daughter to death and her lover as well. But she, through the working of certain strange and unlooked-for accidents, came in the end to enjoy together with her lover her father's goods, and the affair terminated joyfully and honourably for all concerned therein.

THE END OF THE FORTY-SECOND NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-third

ARGUMENT

MISSE MAZZEO PROTOJUDICE FINDS HIS DAUGHTER WITH ANTONIO MARCELLO, WHO TAKES TO FLIGHT UNRECOGNIZED. THE FATHER SENDS AWAY THE DAUGHTER TO BE KILLED, BUT THOSE WHO ARE CHARGED WITH THE ERRAND ARE PITIFUL OF HER, AND LET HER GO FREE; WHEREUPON SHE, HAVING DONNED MALE ATTIRE, GOES TO THE COURT OF THE DUKE OF CALABRIA! SHE IS TAKEN BY HER LORD TO SALERNO, AND THERE FINDS LODGING IN HER LOVER'S HOUSE, AND LEARNS THAT HE HAS SUCCEEDED TO THE GOODS OF HER FATHER. SHE MAKES HERSELF KNOWN TO HIM; WHEREUPON HE TAKES HER TO WIFE, AND THEY LIVE JOYFULLY UPON THE HERITAGE.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT MISSE JOANNI GUARNA

EXORDIUM

I AM persuaded, my magnificent Misse Joanni, that, as you have let go for a season the enjoyment of your country and your associates and kinsfolk, you may find special pleasure in reading the letters of your friends and hearing report of your former compatriots. Therefore, meseems that, by writing this letter, I shall in some wise give satisfaction to yourself, and also to that friendship which has subsisted so many years between us; in order that, when you shall read the same after so long an absence, your Masuccio may be continually present to your eyes, and to your thoughts likewise. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

I REMEMBER that I have often heard my old grandfather* tell us a true story how, in the time of Charles II.,† there lived in Salerno a worthy gentleman of ancient and noble family who was called Messer Mazzeo Protojudice, the richest citizen of the town in money and lands. Now when he was full of years his wife died, leaving him an only daughter named Veronica, handsome, and very discreet, whom he still kept unmarried in his own house—although she had been sought by divers noble suitors—either by reason of his great love or because he desired for her a grand alliance. It happened that there was a noble youth called Antonio Marcello, who from his earliest days had closely frequented the house, for the reason that he was of near kinship with the wife of Misser Mazzeo, and to him Veronica had given her love so fully that she could find no rest. Antonio, who was a prudent and most honest-minded youth, and one loved by Veronica's father as his own son, perceived how the matter stood, and, as he was young and lusty, and unable through unstable will to beat back the assaults of love, he was fired by a similar passion. And because it happened that the lovers were granted an opportunity favourable for the gratification of their mutual desires, they contrived at their convenience to taste the sweetest fruits of their love. And albeit by using great caution they compassed their enjoyment, their foresight could not provide against the great disaster which malignant Fortune was plotting! For once, when they were passing the night in gladsome wise and unsuspecting of danger, it happened that they were espied by a servant of the house, who straightway told all to Misser Mazzeo. Thereupon the father, fired with rage and malice, flew with his servants to the spot where the lovers were and laid violent hands upon them

* Probably Tommaso Mariconda, who is named in Novel XIV.

† He reigned from 1285 to 1309.

just at the moment when they were reaching the summit of their bliss. But Antonio, who was very active and courageous, having forcibly loosened himself from seizure and cleared a way with his sword, fled to his own house without being recognized by anyone.

Misser Mazzeo was wellnigh stricken to death by grief when he perceived to what issue the affair had come, and desired his daughter to tell him who the youth might be; but she, being a very prudent girl, and knowing well enough that her father's flawless virtue, rather than let him live out his old age under such a burden of shame, would of a surety move him to compass Antonio's death, made up her mind that her lover's life was dearer to her than her own, and spake to her father her final answer by declaring that she would sooner suffer death by all possible torture than reveal the name of her lover. The father raged against her anew, and, after he had put her to divers tortures and found her still obstinate in her denial, finally resolved most cruelly to have her put to death, what though he was hard pressed by love of his own flesh and blood. Wherefore, without desiring to behold her more, he commanded two of his most trusted servants that they should straightway take her with them in a boat, and should cast her overboard after having put out several miles to sea.

These men, albeit the task was an abhorrent one, bound her with all speed to prove their obedience, and led her away to the seashore; and, whilst they prepared the boat, one of them was seized with pity of her, and after he had dexterously felt his way with his companion, who was equally adverse to such barbarity, they went on from one word to another, and finally agreed that, even should they meet death therefor, they would spare her life and set her free. Thus, having loosened her bonds, they told her how they, being moved to pity, would go on no further with the execution of the cruel doom laid upon them by her father, begging her that, as a reward for this service and in remembrance of so great a boon, she would exile herself and let long time elapse before her father could hear of their deed. The poor girl, when she knew that she was to receive her life from

the hands of her own servants, felt that her thankful words would be a very meagre reward for so great a service; wherefore she prayed to the Rewarder of all righteous actions that he would on her account repay them abundantly for their inestimable gift. Then, because of the fear and terror which assailed them for what they had done, she promised and swore by the salvation they had given her that she would hereafter rule her life so that neither her pitiless father nor any other living person should have tidings of her being.

Then, having cut off her hair and disguised her as a man as best they could in their own clothes, they gave her what little money they had, and pointed out to her the way to Naples, taking leave of her with many tears. Afterwards they made their way back, carrying with them her clothes, and assured their lord that they had killed the damsel, and then, after binding a great stone round her neck, had cast her body into the sea about ten miles from land. The ill-fated noble damsel, who had never heretofore gone forth from the city, although with every step she felt her spirits fail at the thought that she was leaving her Antonio without hope of ever beholding him again, although divers vain dreams of returning would ever and anon come into her brain; still, when she recalled to mind the boon which had been granted to her; and the promise she had made, gratitude, the very flower of all the virtues, swayed her soul so powerfully that it cast out every opposing thought, and thus she, traversing the ways in a fashion mightily strange to her, commending herself to God and pressing onward, journeyed she knew not whither in heavy sorrow for the rest of the night, and found herself at daybreak near to Nocera, where she was overtaken by a company of wayfarers who were going to Naples, and to these she joined herself in friendly wise. Amongst them was a Calabrian gentleman, who was taking certain moulting falcons to the Duke of Calabria, and he observed that this youth had a very seemly presence, wherefore he asked him whence he had come, and whether he was minded to take service. Now in her childhood Veronica had been wont often to imitate an old Apulian woman of the household, and had

learnt from her many words of the Apulian dialect, so herseemed that she might well use this speech henceforth. Therefore she answered, "Misser, I am from Apulia, and have left home on purpose to find service. But, seeing that I come of noble stock, I should not be well pleased to engage myself to do mean offices." Then said the Calabrian: "Would you consent to take care of falcons?" Veronica heard this speech with no little pleasure, because at home she had been wont to tend, not one, but many falcons, using the greatest care. Wherefore she answered that from her childhood she had been accustomed to this service, and to no other, and after a few more words she got ready to hold one of the falcons. When they came to Naples the gentleman caused her to be attired in a fitting costume, so that she seemed like a graceful and well-trained squire; and, whether it was thus willed by Fate, or whether the charming presence of Veronica stirred him thereto, it came to pass that, when the falcons were brought to the duke, he wished to have, besides the birds, the Apulian squire who managed them in such excellent fashion.

The Duke's wish having been carried out, Veronica became one of the household. A Neapolitan gentleman was ordered to attend upon her, and she gave herself up to her duties and to the service of the duke with such assiduity that in a short time she won his good will and was numbered amongst his first favourites, being treated by him with no little honour. Thus, always increasing in good repute, she dwelt in the duke's household until it seemed good to Fortune to change the course of her affairs. Her old father had consumed his years with his heart full of intolerable grief, and, when the deed he had wrought came to the public ear, he passed the greater part of his time shut up in his house, withdrawing now and then into the country to spend his wretched and solitary days. Antonio, after he had plentifully bewept the death of his Veronica with bitter and bloody tears, ascertained by cautious questioning that Misser Mazzeo had never been able to discover who was the youth who had fled that night;

wherefore, in order to withdraw all suspicion from himself, and likewise moved thereto by pity, he went a few days after the deed had been done to visit the old man, and abode with him wellnigh continuously in his house; using towards him the utmost care and affection. More often than not he would accompany Misser Mazzeo when he withdrew from the city, bearing himself as if he had been a most devoted son. All this pleased the old man amain, for it seemed to him that Antonio alone had not forsaken him in his great struggle. On this account, and because of the singular worth of the young man, Misser Mazzeo felt constrained to love him as his own son, turning all his affection upon him in such fashion that he could not endure to pass a single hour apart from his Antonio. And, being well assured that the young man showed no abatement in attentive service and love and reverence, he resolved that, as cruel Fate had left him without an heir, he would adopt Antonio in life and in death likewise as his son. Having settled definitely to carry out this resolve, and signed his last and final testament of all his goods, in chattels and in estates, he appointed his Antonio heir to the same, and in a very brief space of time passed from this life.

Antonio, having inherited so fine an estate, went to live in Misser Mazzeo's house, in which there was no single spot which did not cause him, through remembrance of his ladylove, to sigh and shed bitter tears; and, calling to mind continually how she had chosen death rather than let it be known who he was, he felt overcome by this debt of love, and, having likewise considered her many excellencies, he determined, after taking counsel with himself, that he would never wive with another woman. And while matters stood thus it happened that the duke purposed to pass through Calabria, which thing was mightily pleasing to Veronica, for the reason that she felt she would now not only visit the land she had abandoned, but would have some intelligence of her lover, and also of her father, whom, even now, she could not bring herself to hate. In order to run in no danger of recognition, she had been careful

to make no inquiries after them, neither had she ever received any tidings of them. Wherefore, when they had come to Salerno, and all the household of the duke had been settled in lodgings in the city according to their rank, it pleased Fortune that it should fall to the lot of Antonio Marcello to receive into his house the Apulian squire and his attendant, and how hugely this accident must have been to Veronica's taste everyone may judge. They were honourably received and made welcome by Antonio, and in the evening he let prepare for them a most sumptuous repast in that selfsame loggia in which aforetimes he had been used to take pleasure with his ladylove. At this moment, as he looked from the one to the other of his guests, he figured to himself now and again the image of his Veronica, and, as he called to memory her life and death, he was fain to let mingle passionate sighs with every word he uttered.

Veronica perceived that she had been brought back to her own house, and, albeit she was purely glad to see her faithful lover the master of all her estate, nevertheless, because she saw naught of her father or of any of the servants she had left behind her, she was wrung with filial affection, and, though she longed for tidings of her father, she dared not ask for them. While she sat at supper, thus confused in humour, the attendant knight inquired of Antonio whether the device of arms painted in the loggia was his own, whereto Antonio replied that it was not, but that it belonged to a most illustrious cavalier named Misser Mazzeo Protojudice, who, being left in old age childless, had bequeathed to him all his substance; wherefore, as the adopted son, he had taken, over and above the estate, both the family name and the arms of the cavalier as those of his own father. When Veronica heard these words, though she was filled with joy so great and unexpected that she could only keep back her tears with difficulty, she contrived to maintain her composure till the end of supper. And when the feast was finished it seemed to her that the time was come when she should receive with open arms that bliss which kindly Fortune had reserved for her. Thus, having taken Antonio by the hand and left the

others at table, she led him away into a chamber, and, albeit she was minded to say to him certain words which she had put together in her own mind—words designed to let her see whether he recognized her in any way—she was unable, by reason of her joy and her tears, to open her lips. Wherefore she let herself fall fainting into Antonio's arms, crying, "Ah, my Antonio! can it be that you know me not?" Now he, as I have already said, had more than once imagined that he beheld in her his Veronica, and, hearing these words, his doubts became certainty, and, overcome by the most tender emotion, said, "Ah, my sweet soul! are you indeed yet alive?" Having thus spoken, he clasped her in his arms!

After they had held one another for some time in close embrace in silence they came back to their wonted mood, and told each other divers of the adventures which had befallen them; and then Antonio, who was in no wise minded to keep the matter long in suspense, told her what thing he proposed to do forthwith, whereat they both rejoiced exceedingly. When they returned from the chamber to rejoin the attendant knight, what though it was now full late, Antonio bade him go quickly and summon all the kinsfolk of the lady, and his own as well, to his house on business of great weight. When the aforesaid had come without delay, and were all gathered together, he besought them to accompany him to the palace of the duke, for that he purposed, with their leave, to beg him of his grace to reinstate him in possession of a certain noble fief, some time ago held by Misser Mazzeo, but for many years occupied by another from whom no dues had been received through lack of knowledge thereanent. Whereupon all those assembled declared that they were willing to go with him; and, when they were come into the presence of the duke, Antonio took his Veronica by the hand, and then before all present they told everything which had happened to them in most exact wise, keeping back naught, and declared next how, from the beginning of their love, they had, by mutual consent and in good faith, taken each other for man and wife, and how they intended, by the favour of his highness and in the sight of this worshipful com-

pany, to make public the final celebration of this marriage. And although the duke and his barons, and the kinsfolk of both the lovers, and all the citizens and strangers there assembled, stood wonder-stricken while they listened to the story of these strange adventures, they were nevertheless overjoyed when they knew that the matter was to come to an end, honourable and prosperous to Antonio and to Veronica as well, and they gave marvellous high praise to what he had done, and to her great virtue. The duke, pleased amain with the issue, let them return home, and next morning caused mass to be said with the highest pomp and the two lovers to be united in worthy fashion in his own presence, and in the presence of a vast crowd of nobles and citizens, to the general satisfaction of all our Salernitans. Then, having received from him many generous gifts, they went their way, and in wealth and in happiness, blessed in their mutual love and in their fair offspring, they enjoyed a long term of life.

MASUCCIO

BECAUSE the ending of this novel has proved so happy, and pleasant, and honourable, and full of profit, that it must have softened down and overcome the pity which anyone may have been moved to feel for the former mischances of the lovers, I am tempted—leaving these two to make up for time lost, and bearing in mind only the virtues of the last-created Duke of Calabria, and maybe those of the first as well—to let follow in the order of my work the story of another magnificent and worthy deed of liberality wrought by our own most illustrious lord, the present Duke of Calabria; and, as he assuredly surpasses all other princes in virtue, so this tale, which I am minded to inscribe to his most illustrious consort, outstrips by a long way all which have been told hitherto, as anyone who reads the same may judge:

THE END OF THE FORTY-THIRD NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-fourth

ARGUMENT

MARINO CARACCILO* IS ENAMOURED OF A LADY, WHO LOVES HIM IN RETURN. THEY ARE ABOUT TO COME TO A CONCLUSION, WHEN THE LADY BEHOLDS THE DUKE OF CALABRIA, WHO PROVES MORE TO HER TASTE THAN MARINO; SO, HAVING ABANDONED HER FIRST ENTERPRISE, SHE FOLLOWS UP THE SECOND, AND CONTRIVES TO INDUCE THE DUKE TO TAKE ENJOYMENT WITH HER: HE, ON HIS WAY THITHER, BECOMES CONCERNED AT THE GRIEF OF HIS FRIEND, AND, OUT OF HIS GOODNESS, RENOUNCES THE PLEASURE, THUS LEAVING MARINO THE POSSESSOR OF THE BOOTY.

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS IPPOLITA MARIA
DE' VISCONTI OF ARAGON, DUCHESS OF
CALABRIA

EXORDIUM

PROVIDED that virtuous listeners ever find consolation in hearing of noble deeds wrought by those alien and unknown to them, O lady, who art to me as a star benignant and far removed, how much more deeply and deservedly must they who may be joined to such persons by friendship or the tie of blood be stirred by outward joy and inward pleasure at hearing celebrated high praise concerning them! And because my thoughts seek no other end than to write down such things as may delight you amain, I will not refrain from speaking to you, who are to-day the supreme ensample of virtue to this our time, of a singular and

* See Exordium to Novel VII.

perhaps unparalleled deed of magnanimity, practised by a certain one who is justly dearer to you than your own life—one with whom you have been made one flesh by the marriage tie, what though you own two separate bodies. So that, when this deed shall be added to all the other heaped-up virtues of your most just and worthy spouse, the perfect love you bear towards him already may, to your joy, grow greater every day, and your happiness ever increase. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

YOUR majesty will then understand that, after the campaign last past of the war in the Romagna, both belligerents found it necessary to retire into winter quarters because the state of the weather did not allow them to prosecute further their military operations; the one army retiring to this quarter, and the other to that, as each found most convenient. Amongst the other leaders it fell out that the illustrious prince, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, your most worthy consort, occupied the parts around Pisa, and led thither his most valiant and unconquered Aragonese army, and cantoned his men-at-arms in the several towns and villages round about, according to the usage and discipline of war. Having done this, he found it necessary to visit in person the most famous cities and territories of Italy, to treat of high matters bearing upon the well-being and condition of the league; and after he had been welcomed in all of these, and loyally received with great rejoicing, and honoured greatly, it happened that he came to a certain town, the name of which I do not feel bound to tell, which pleased him as a resting-place beyond all the others. While he abode in this city, greatly delighted therewith, and feasting without end, it came to pass that one of his most intimate courtiers, named Marino Caracciolo, a gentleman distinguished both by worth and high lineage, was one day riding through the city for his pleasure, when he caught sight of a fair dame, young and very beautiful, the wife of a

citizen of repute. So strongly did she strike his fancy that he felt himself, without moving from where he stood, so completely snared in the toils of love that he knew not what road he ought to take to return home. And thus, by riding thereby every day, and by gazing upon her in seemly wise, it came to pass that she was induced to return his love.

On this account Marino was delighted beyond measure and let arise the hope of reaping some still richer harvest. Wherefore one day he gave a feast to the honour of the lord duke aforesaid, to which there repaired the greater part of the ladies of the city, and amongst them that particular one who was especially loved and worshipped by Marino himself. She, being espied by the duke, pleased him mightily as one of the fairest dames present; and he, unwitting that his good friend Marino was in any way enslaved by her, made up his mind to take her for himself, and to follow up to the end this adventure so worthy of his attempt. The fair lady, who had never before seen the duke, what though she had heard divers people praise him marvellous high, and set him down as wise and well-mannered and prudent beyond all other princes, valiant in arms, stalwart and gallant and courageous, perceived at once that the report given her had not only not exaggerated his actual excellencies, but that he was, in sooth, the very mirror and example to all living men in grace and comeliness. She, as she took heed of his many excellent parts, gazed at him long and attentively, praying God the while to give him good fortune. The duke, who, as I have already said, was particularly taken with so fair a dame, saw, while he gazed at her in order to follow up the track, that she was no less enamoured than he himself; and before they departed from the feast each one had given the other evident signs of being inflamed in similar wise. When they had returned home the duke straightway caused to be made known to him all the lady's circumstances; and, after divers letters and messages had passed between them, it seemed to both of them, when the day of the duke's departure drew anigh, that they should procure, as soon as they could, the supreme con-

clusion of their passion. Wherefore, by the aid of one who was privy to the affair, they arranged to come together the following night, seeing that on the previous day the lady's husband had gone to Genoa.

Now in the meantime the lady, taken up with this new and more weighty affair, had slighted Marino in such wise that not only did she refuse to glance at him as had been her wont, but she displayed towards him a humour which became every day more unbending and haughty and cruelly hostile. Marino, ill content thereof, as anyone may well believe, and all the more because he knew not what cause he could have given for this strange new mood of hers, could find no peace and was overcome by such cruel grief that he became in seeming as another man. Many times did the duke question him as to his ill condition, and to these inquiries Marino replied by some fictitious story. At last the hour approached when the duke was minded to go and take pleasure with the lady, as had been duly arranged; and, forasmuch as he was never wont to embark on such enterprises without first taking counsel of Marino, he called him into the chamber and said: "Having marked, my Marino, in what ill humour you have been all these days, and having asked in vain of you the cause thereof, I gave over troubling you further thereanent because you did not seem in the mood for such questioning. And for this reason I have not told you, who are the particular sharer of all my secrets, of a fresh and fervent passion which has seized me, and of the successful issue of the same, which will, I hope, be brought about before many hours have passed. I beg you, therefore, by the service you owe me, and by the love you bear me, that you will lay bare that real and hidden trouble which torments you, and likewise chase away somewhat your anguish and grief, and put on a joyful face, so that you may be with me this evening; for you must know that I should go my way but ill content were you not by my side."

Marino, when he listened to these most kindly words, felt that he had wrought no slight offence to his lord in having all this time kept his love a secret; wherefore, using such excuses as seemed due and sufficient, he told

the duke at full length the story of his falling in love from the very beginning, the name of the lady, and every particular event, good and bad alike, which had befallen him. The duke, when he heard all this, was for many reasons ill-pleased and even somewhat angered; nevertheless, remarking the nature of Marino's passion, and deeming that with his own magnanimity and high station it behoved him to use all the greater consideration towards his follower, he quickly determined that it would be beyond all comparison more pleasant to him to content his friend's desire than to satisfy his own appetite, so he spake thus: "My Marino, as you ought to know better than anyone else, I have never from my tenderest youth held aught so dear that I was not ready to share the same with my friends if they should so will; and certes you may be sure that, if the thing which you love so greatly were of such a nature that it could be yours and mine at the same time, I would now deal with it in just the same fashion as I have ever dealt with other matters. And, albeit up to this hour I may have held her dearer than my very eye, and we have both of us looked forward to our mutual embracings this night with the warmest longing, and although I have chosen you to accompany me on my errand, I have nevertheless determined and desire that the issue may be as follows that by conquering myself I may cause my present wish to be my wish no longer, rather than to behold you languishing in sorrow and perishing in your travail of love. And if you should desire to oblige me in this matter, chase away all the grief which has heretofore possessed you, and think only of putting on a cheerful humour, and prepare to accompany me, so that I, being in this mind, may grant you possession of this lady you love so well." Marino, hearing this news, was wonder-stricken; and when he realized how great was the generosity with which the duke proposed to treat him, he felt just as much bashfulness at accepting the same. When he had as best he could returned the gratitude which was due he ended by saying that he would die rather than defile, or think of defiling, aught which the duke might have destined for his own use.

At this the duke began to laugh, and said that he was minded Marino should prosecute this enterprise on his own behalf; and, having taken him by the hand, they set forth on their way. When they had come to the lady's house, and had left their attendants in the street for better security, the duke, accompanied only by Marino, went in; and, having been led into a chamber by a serving-woman, found there the lady, who was joyfully awaiting the duke. She went to meet him in gladsome wise; and, although she knew well enough that her former lover was there present while they talked thus merrily, she took no more heed of him than as if he had been some stranger brought thither by the duke. Then, after many sweet kissings and merry play, it seemed to the duke that the time had come when he should finish the task which had brought him thither; so, taking the lady by the hand, he said: "Dear lady, I beseech you, by the love which you have been led to give me, that you will not take amiss what I am about to say. For the more unseemly my request may appear, the greater will be your love for me in granting it. For I must tell you that, when last I left the presence of the king, my most illustrious lord and sire, he gave me amongst other counsels one which bade me, whenever I should find myself in the pitfalls of love, that I should have naught to do with any woman unless I should first have made trial of her by some intimate friend of mine; because of the well-known instance of the mighty King Lanzilao, who was infected by a woman of this country while engaged in a like enterprise. And although I am well assured that you would suffer a thousand deaths on behalf of my life; nevertheless, in order to carry out to the full the counsels of that most illustrious lord aforesaid, the king my father, I am forced to beg you that you will consent, in joyous and triumphant mood, that this my perfect friend and well-trusted follower, whom I regard as another self, may do this office for me, and be, in twofold wise, your constant and only lover."

The lady, who was very well advised and prudent, quickly understood, by what had gone before, the drift

of the duke's wishes, exactly as if the plain facts had been told to her word by word. She was, in sooth, cut to the heart with grief at being thus scorned and cast off by such an illustrious and seemly gentleman, whose embraces she had anticipated with no small longing, and with good reason; nevertheless, seeing that in her case it behoved her to make a virtue of necessity, she took counsel with herself, and hiding as best she could the fierce passion which possessed her, she made answer to the duke with a look of feigned pleasure on her face: "Although, most virtuous prince, love and your own exceeding comeliness, together with your so many singular and excellent parts, have led me into this my present position, which, indeed, is one demanding a proof of my virtue, I would you should be assured, before I disclose to you my intention, that I kept my wits clear, enough to perceive that your love and mine were unfairly matched. Nevertheless, having observed by many and manifest signs that my person pleased you greatly, you yourself became, for many reasons, most dear to my fancy. But now I perceive that you have other views with regard to me, likewise that your wonted and well-known virtue and noble munificence are reaching up to a yet greater height; for you, what though you are a most illustrious prince and son of so potent and excellent a king, are abnegating the place of principal in this affair, and of your own will acting as a faithful go-between, in order to satisfy the longings of another, thus preferring the pleasure of your most loyal servant to the delight which might have filled your heart and mine as well—a renunciation such as is not required by any of the laws of love. But, so as not to balk or by any deed of mine to cloud the brightness of your lofty generosity, and without aught of gainsaying, I have once for all determined to obey you, my most gracious and excellent lord duke, and to lay myself out with all my heart to please this most noble gentleman, my whilom lover. Thus, without losing your highness I shall have recovered him with all the more pleasure and delight, no less liberal of my love to him than you have been of your earnest wishes on his behalf."

Then, having taken Marino by the hand and besought the duke that he would not find it amiss to wait a while, they withdrew into another chamber, where, after they had spent some short time in close and loving embraces, and sweet kissings, and other pleasant conversation, Marino began the longed-for sport with his falcon in a mood much more eager than vigorous, and therefore managed to capture only a single partridge, and that with difficulty. And although in the recover he attempted to take a second by a back stroke, he failed in his attempt, what though he used his dogs and all other arts of venery. Thus, having taken only one, he went back to the duke. The lady, bearing herself in merry and gracious wise, came after him, carrying in her hand a lighted torch, and said to the duke in jocular fashion: "My lord, the trial which your good follower has just made is such as the most valiant esquire should make on behalf of his lord; still, as he only tasted lightly the feast, he seemed to show that he had had enough and to spare thereof." The duke as he listened laughed heartily, and they spent the greater part of the night in very seemly and pleasant discourse; and when the duke deemed that it was time to depart, and when he had given to the lady many rich and precious gems to complete his most gracious liberality, he took his leave. Whether or not Marino ever returned to take another turn of sport, or whether what he did on this occasion contented him, I have never heard him say.

MASUCCIO

WHAT eloquence, however flowery or finished it be, would suffice to tell of the many virtues which have found a permanent home in the spirit of this terrestrial god, as if it were their natural dwelling-place? Who shall be able to set down in writing the many praiseworthy accomplishments and the illustrious deeds of this true king's son and perfect gentleman? Who shall sing the glorious fame, and the enduring reputation, which this prince has by his own

worth acquired for himself in all the parts of Italy? Who will find praises adequate to extol the virtue, the magnificence, and the generosity which he showed towards his well-beloved and faithful servant? What father dealing with his only son, what brother with brother, what friend with friend—and I can cite naught, beyond this—could have equalled him in virtue? I, who wished merely to touch upon this theme, feel my lyre grow harsh—know that my wit is feeble and my wanton hand insufficient to wield the pen. Forsooth, I would rather hold my peace, seeing that I cannot say enough thereanent. And, as I have now done with it, naught remains for me to say but to exclaim, Blessed are the people who will live under his rule, blessed are the servants who behold him, blessed are the ministers who wait upon him, but most blessed may you be called, immortal goddess, Ippolita Maria, his most worthy consort, to whom the Fates have granted the enjoyment of such a treasure! And no less justly may he be called thrice blessed, for that he has been joined by a holy sacrament to so noble a lady, goodly with virtue and uprightness, the fount of all beauty and grace, the stream of magnanimity, of gratitude and charity: Oh, worthy couple! Oh, glorious union! Oh, joyful and happy bond! Let us pray to the gods without ceasing that they may preserve you and yours for many years in prosperous and peaceful estate, in such wise as each one of you must especially desire: Amen.

THE END OF THE FORTY-FOURTH NOVEL

Novel the Forty-fifth

ARGUMENT

A CASTILIAN SCHOLAR, WHILE JOURNEYING TO BOLOGNA; FALLS IN LOVE AT AVIGNON, AND IN ORDER TO HAVE HIS WILL OF THE LADY COVENANTS TO GIVE HER A THOUSAND DUCATS. REPENTING OF HIS DEED, HE GOES HIS WAY, AND BY CHANCE MEETS THE LADY'S HUSBAND, TO WHOM, UNWITTING WHO HE WAS, HE RECOUNTS HIS ADVENTURE. THE HUSBAND DISCOVERS THAT IT IS HIS WIFE WHO IS THUS CONCERNED, AND INDUCES THE SCHOLAR TO RETURN WITH HIM TO AVIGNON. THERE HE RESTORES THE MONEY, KILLS HIS WIFE, AND BESTOWS UPON THE SCHOLAR MANY GIFTS AND MUCH HONOURABLE USAGE.

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, DON HENRY OF
ARAGON *

EXORDIUM

THERE is a proverb, my most illustrious lord, in frequent use amongst the common people, that every promise is a debt, and if this be true—as it manifestly seems to be—reason and honesty demand that every debtor should, as soon as may be, give full satisfaction to whomsoever he may have bound himself. Therefore, as I call to mind a promise of one of my novels, by which I made myself of my own free will a debtor to you, I have undertaken to unload my weary shoulders of this onerous burden by offering to you the present tale, by which means, besides ridding myself of an obligation, I shall let you hear of a singular act of

* Natural son of Ferdinand I.

magnanimity, and of the great generosity exhibited by a French cavalier towards a noble young Castilian. And although, certes, this deed of virtue will be marvellously commended by many, I am persuaded that some of these will find it easier to praise the same than to imitate it, should they ever find themselves in like case. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

A NOBLE youth of Castile, a student of the law attracted by the long-continued and widely-spread renown of the University of Bologna, resolved to go thither, so that, after studying there, he might proceed to the doctorate. His name was Missere Alfonso of Toledo; he was young and of excellent parts; and, besides this, he had been left very rich by the death of his father, a cavalier of note. Wherefore, to accomplish forthwith his praiseworthy purpose, he furnished himself with an array of sumptuous books, rich garments, good horses, and suitable servants, and thus equipped, and with a thousand golden ducats in his purse, he took the road to Italy. After travelling several days he found that he had left Castile behind him, traversed Catalonia, and had arrived in France. Having come to Avignon he determined to tarry there some days, either to rest his weary cattle or for some other need: He found lodging at an inn, and the next day he and his attendants rambled about the city; and, as fate willed it, while he was passing from one street to another he caught sight of a fair lady at a window. She was indeed young and very beautiful; but in his lover's humour himseemed that he had never before beheld her equal, and so delightful was the sight of her that before he moved from the spot he found himself taken with love of her in a fashion which no argument could gainsay.

On this account, regarding no more his virtuous intention, he resolved not to quit Avignon until he should, either altogether or in part, have won the lady's favour; and as he passed by her window continually, she, who

was well versed in such business, perceived that the poor young fellow was so much enamoured of her that it would now be no easy matter to keep him aloof. When she remarked that he was young and beardless, and that, judging by his garb and his following, he must be rich and of noble descent, she determined to seize upon this dainty morsel forthwith, and to strip him of his last coin. Wherefore, in order to give him the opportunity of speaking or sending word to her, she acted in the fashion which ships becalmed at sea follow when they despatch boats ashore to fetch wood; for, having let come to her an old waiting-woman of hers, well-informed and practised in such business, she set her to ply her work by the window so that Missere Alfonso might easily see her. The youth, who desired nothing better, approached the old woman and began speech with her, and before they parted each had learnt the private circumstances of the other. Then, when the crone had returned to her mistress, and after divers messages had been sent from either side, they came at last to a clear understanding that the lady would grant him the favour of her love, and would await his coming the following night, and that he should bring with him the thousand ducats of gold which was all the money he had. At the longed-for hour the ill-advised youth, with his money in his pocket, betook himself to the house of the lady, whose name was Laura; and, after she had given him joyful reception, and caressed him beyond measure, and caused him to hand over to her the thousand ducats, wherewith she was marvellously content, they went to bed together. Missere Alfonso being of that age when the end and the beginning of such work seems the same thing, we may believe that he spent all the remainder of the night in satisfying his ardent desires. Then, when it was day, he sprang out of bed, and after making divers fresh plans whereby he might again take up the work he had begun, he returned to his inn, sleepy and somewhat repenting of his deed, accompanied by his servants, who had waited wearily for him at the lady's door.

She, who with delight amain and in such brief time

had put her hand upon so rich a chance, perceived well enough that the youth was so deeply in her toils that Bologna and the study of the law had no longer any place in his thoughts, and that before his departure he would assuredly desire to take his pleasure with her again. When the day was done, Missere Alfonso, deeming that next evening, according to their agreement, he would be received by the lady joyfully and with yet more kindly welcome, went at nightfall to Madonna Laura's door. After he had given the signal several times, and had got back no sound to break the silence, he knew, too late, that he had in one and the same hour lost the lady he had enjoyed, his honour, and his money. So, having gone back to his inn grieving wellnigh to death, he spent all that night in vexation and anguish of mind. The next day, in order that he might have final proof of the trick which had been put upon him, he walked round about her house, and, finding all the doors and windows closed, and many other signs of like import, he knew that he had been betrayed and flouted by the consummate craft of this wicked woman. Having returned to his followers, such grief and desperation fell upon him that he was more than once on the point of plunging a dagger into his breast. However, restraining himself, lest a worse thing should befall him, he resolved to quit the place.

Now because there was not left in his purse a wretched solitary penny-piece wherewith to pay his host, he determined to sell a very excellent mule of his; and, having done this and discharged his score, with what little money was left to him he went on towards Italy by the County of Provence. All the way, however, he shed bitter tears, and was especially tormented by the grievous thought that, after purposing to pursue his studies as a nobleman should, he was now forced to make his way to Bologna selling and pledging his goods and lodging at mean inns, and after reaching his destination would be obliged to live there like a poor scholar. As he pursued his way in indigence and travail of mind, he came at last to Trayques, and took lodging in an inn where, by a strange and unexpected chance, the husband of

Madonna Laura was tarrying that same night. This gentleman was an accomplished and graceful knight, a man of great eloquence and power, and was now on his way back from the Papal court to the King of France, by whom he had been sent as ambassador. He had already requested the host that, should any other gentleman arrive at the inn, he would bid the same join him at table, as is the fashion used by French gentlemen on their travels; whereto the host made answer that there was in the inn a Spanish scholar who, by his servants' report, was on his way to Bologna; but that this youth, by reason of a fit of melancholy which had come over him, had eaten naught for two days. The cavalier when he heard this was stirred by his natural kindness, and resolved in any event to have the scholar to sup with him; wherefore, having gone to him in person and found him sitting sad and distraught with grief in his chamber, he took him by the hand in very familiar wise, without making any other salutation, and said: "You must without fail sup with me." The young man, remarking the cavalier, and judging from his aspect that he was a worthy gentleman, straightway sat down to table with him, and when they had supped and dismissed their attendants, the knight asked Missere Alfonso who he was, and on what errand and whither he was bound; and, beyond this, if he could tell it honestly, to say what the cause of his deep melancholy.

Missere Alfonso, who for every word he uttered let forth two sighs, replied to the first of these questions as briefly as he could, but begged the cavalier that he would not press for an answer to the other. The gentleman; when he learned who the scholar was, and for what reason he had left home—and he knew likewise by hearsay that his father was a man of great reputation—was seized afresh with the desire to learn what accident could have befallen him on the way to make him grieve thus sorely. He went on inquiring, and the youth refusing to reply, till at last Missere Alfonso, without taking farther heed, told the whole story from beginning to end: who the lady was, and how he had enjoyed her; adding that he, assailed by excessive chagrin at the flout put

upon him, and at his shame and the loss of so great a sum of money, had many a time come within an ace of taking his own life. When the cavalier—thus instant to seek that which he neither expected nor desired—heard this, anyone who may have tested the truth of such a case will be able to say how great was his righteous sorrow, how he was as one half dead, and how vastly his mental torture surpassed that of the scholar. However, having discreetly suppressed his intolerable grief, giving some slight vent to his feeling the while, it occurred to him what he would do; so, turning towards the youth, he said: "My son, you by your own words let me know how ill regulated has been your conduct, and how; like a silly boy, you have let yourself be gulled by this vile wanton; and certes, if I deemed that my chiding would profit you aught, I would never weary—supposing we were to live together hereafter—of reprehending you every day for your folly. But because I see you stand vastly more in need of actual help than of reproaches, I hope your present grief, together with the consciousness of your offence, will for this once be penalty enough. Therefore, take heart, and dream not madly of making the case worse by injuring your own person, for I will let this business, end for you, as though you were my own son. And, as you see that I am a traveller and a stranger in these parts, and wanting in means to carry out my desire, I beg you will not find it amiss to return home with me for a few days, so that you may afterwards in joy and contentment finish your journey, and carry out your original intent; because for the sake of your forbears, and of your well-born and noble seeming, I cannot let you go to the university in your present mood of set despair; and, besides this, you cannot, poor as you now are, live worthily as a gentleman ought."

The young man, astonished at such kindness, returned the cavalier as much gratitude as the grief and injury oppressing him allowed him to express, and after some further discourse each went to his rest. The following morning they took horse early and returned towards France, and having covered all the distance by the knowledge of the country possessed by the cavalier;

they arrived in Avignon that same evening; and when they had entered the city the gentleman took the young man by the hand and led him to his own house. The scholar not only recognized the quarter of the city and the house, but marked the lady as she came forward with lighted torches to meet her husband, rejoicing the while. Whereupon he quickly saw how the matter stood, and deemed that he must die straightway, being so greatly overcome with fear thereanent that he could scarce dismount. Nevertheless he got down at the request of his host, who took him by the arm and led him into that self-same room where, not many hours before, he had sate, finding therein such brief pleasure, and such long-abiding trouble and loss. The lady, on her part, recognized the scholar, and, because the foreboding of the fate in store for her seized upon her, everyone will be able to imagine how great was the terror and the grief which possessed her. When the supper-hour had come, they all—the terror-stricken lady amongst them—sat down; and when the meal was finished the three of them—each one filled with bitter woe, although from differing causes—sat on at table. Then the cavalier, having turned towards his wife, said: "Laura, fetch me hither those thousand golden ducats which this man gave to you; and for the price of which you sold your person, and my honour and your own, and the honour of all your kinsfolk as well." The lady, when she heard these words, deemed that the house was falling about her ears, and, like one dumb, stood without speaking a single word; whereupon the husband, looking upon her very sternly, took his dagger and said: "Vile woman, if you wish not to die this moment, do as I bid you." Then she, seeing how fierce his anger was and that no refusal was possible, went sorrowing amain to fetch the ducats, and, having brought them, cast them on the table. The cavalier poured them out, and, taking one of them, gave it to the youth, who stood looking on in terror; for he feared every moment lest the husband should slay him and the lady as well with the dagger he held in his hand.

But the cavalier said to him: "Missere Alfonso, it is right and seemly that everyone should receive due pay-

ment on account of service rendered, and if my wife here, who has given you the pleasure of her person and duped you finely to boot, has betaken herself to such work for the price of shame, she may rightly be classed as a harlot; and because, however fair a harlot may be, she deserves no higher payment than a single ducat for one night, I am minded that you, who bought this merchandize for yourself, should pay the due price therefor." Next he commanded his wife to take the ducat; and, when she had done this, he, marking how the young man was all shamed and afeared, and unable to look him in the face, and, certes, more in need of heartening than of rebuke, spake thus: "My son, take back your ill-kept and worse spent money, and beware in future that you buy not such base wares at so high a price. As you have left your home for a place wherein you hoped to acquire honour and fame and renown, never waste your time and your wealth in lasciviousness. And, as I do not wish this night to trouble you with more discourse, I bid you now get to your rest, and be assured, on the word of a true knight, that I would sooner work an injury to my own person than think of harming either you or your goods." Then, having summoned his servants, the cavalier let the scholar take his money and withdraw to a rich chamber which had been got ready for him; and before he himself went to bed he prepared carefully some poisoned viands, whereof his wife made her last supper.

When the next morning had come, the cavalier caused to be brought out a fine ambling horse and divers other rich and noble presents; and after the young man had made a light repast and taken horse with his followers, the host himself mounted also and rode in company with him for some ten miles beyond the city. When he made ready to return he said to the scholar: "My dear son, my mind is not yet easy for that I merely spared your life and returned your money; wherefore you must in addition accept these small gifts of mine, which, through hurry, I have not been able to make worthier, together with this horse, as a compensation for the mule which you sold, bidding you to have me

in mind whenever you may use the same. I desire, in sooth, that for the future you should regard me as your father, and always depend upon me, whatever you do, and I, for my part, will do the same and look upon you as my son as long as I shall live." Then he tenderly embraced the young man; and when he remarked that, by the flow of his tears and by the excess of joy over so great generosity, Missere Alfonso could scarcely open his lips to thank him, he, weeping likewise, bade him hold his peace, and thus, without being able to say farewell one to the other, they parted with tears and tender kisses. The cavalier returned to the city, and Missere Alfonso in due time arrived in Bologna; and, as I have no fresh tidings concerning what may have befallen them after thus swearing mutual friendship, I will here cease writing about them.

MASUCCIO

ACCORDING to my humble opinion; the gentleman of Avignon ought to be praised no less for the punishment of his profligate wife than for the magnanimity he used towards the noble Castilian; for he was forced to undertake the punishment both by honour and the sense of duty, whereas his generous beneficence was the outcome of his noble nature. Beyond this, I do not mean to vex the gentle youth with the severe blame with which perchance certain others would visit him, seeing that the true nobility of his soul was so great that, being verily and indeed stirred by passion, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his life and his substance as well, to satisfy the great longing of his soul. But as we have spoken enough of these matters, I will now tell of three deeds of extraordinary virtue, wrought by persons of different quality, whereof it will be hard to praise one beyond another.

THE END OF THE FORTY-FIFTH NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-sixth

ARGUMENT

THE KING OF PORTUGAL CAPTURES IN BATTLE AN ARAB CHIEF, WHOSE MOTHER, WITHOUT TAKING FURTHER SECURITY, REPAIRS TO THE KING'S CAMP WITH THIRTY THOUSAND DOUBLOONS AS RANSOM. THE KING IS WILLING TO SURRENDER HIM, BUT REQUIRES CONDITIONS TO WHICH THE ARAB WILL NOT CONSENT; WHEREUPON THE KING GIVES HIM HIS LIBERTY AND HIS MONEY ALSO. AT A FUTURE TIME THE ARAB, OUT OF GRATITUDE, BRINGS A GREAT ARMY AT HIS OWN CHARGES TO AID THE KING IN WAR.

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS AND EXCELLENT GENTLEMAN, THE COUNT OF FUNDE, ONORATO GAJITANO, PROTONOTARY OF THE KINGDOM *

EXORDIUM

BECAUSE you, my most excellent lord, would stand out illustrious even when set in the midst of great-hearted and generous men, I, who am purposed to finish my work by travelling in the paths where deeds of great courage and virtue abound, feel constrained to inscribe one of my novels to you, who have made illustrious the name of Onorato by your inborn worth. It seems, in sooth, most necessary that when writing of you I should consider virtuous deeds alone; wherefore I bid you, most illustrious lord, to enter this

* He was father-in-law to the Prince of Bisignano, the leader of the revolt of the barons, but remained loyal to Ferdinand. See Porzio, "Congiura de Baroni," p. 252.

fair and fertile garden, and, on quitting the same, to pluck and smell its odoriferous blossoms, which are faith and liberality and gratitude. Then, as a wise man, you can decide which of these should be held worthiest in the sight of mankind.

THE NARRATIVE

CONSIDERING that it is already universally known how many and how great have been the wonderful and victorious enterprises and great conquests attempted and achieved by the most Christian princes of Portugal, and how worthy of lasting commemoration the passage of the great sea into Afria, so often made by them when warring against the Aarbs, it would be more than superfluous for me to write particularly thereanent. Therefore, saying naught of the past, and dealing only with the doings of the present sovereign, the invincible lord, King Don Alfonso, I will tell how, after the time when his father, that most excellent and serene lord and king, had occupied the populous city of Agalsere Segher and divers other places taken from the powerful King of Fes, he himself conquered Tangiers, and led his following against the almost impregnable city of Arzil,* and reduced the same to such extremity that it could resist no further. He, however, received word that the King of Fes had despatched a valiant and sturdy captain, named Molefes, who was a kinsman of his, a wise and wary leader, and greatly beloved by the people, with a prodigious army of Arabs for the raising of the leaguer of Arzil. Wherefore King Don Alfonso, not wishing to await in his entrenchments the coming of Molefes, left the bastions around the city sufficiently guarded, and advanced with the greater part of his trustworthy soldiers to meet the Arab captain, disposing his troops in such wise that one morning at daybreak the two powerful hosts met. After a fierce and bloody encounter the Arabs were put to flight, routed and shattered, the greater part of them being either killed or

* In 1471.

wounded or taken: Amongst others the commander, who would not forsake his men, was seized all covered with wounds.

This capture pleased the king fully as much as his victory, for he hoped that the Arabs, having lost their captain, would quickly submit. Wherefore, after he had taken Arzil without further opposition, he determined to keep Molefes in future a prisoner, tending him well and honourably the while. When the King of Fes heard of this battle he grieved amain, and straightway sent to the king to beg him that, even though he would not restore Molefes by the usages of war, he would at least release him as a ransomed prisoner, offering in exchange a huge quantity of money and other gifts. To this request King Alfonso made a curt reply that he was firmly set against any mediation, and that no treasure would suffice to make him change his mind, begging at the same time that this question might never be opened again, forasmuch as any further application would be vain.

When the mother of the Arab leader heard the decisive terms of this reply, although she felt she was without hope, and that any action she might take would be fruitless, she determined, nevertheless, being a true mother, and single-hearted in her love, that she would make the utmost use of her wit and of her great wealth in order to redeem her only and well-beloved son. Wherefore, without asking advice of anyone, she took horse, and, attended by many servants and an honourable equipage, she met the great army of the Christian king, and, when she had without delay dismounted in front of his pavilion, the news of her arrival was forthwith taken to him. He, greatly amazed at her coming, advanced to meet her, and gave her greeting with the highest honour and respect; then, after exchanging certain words, she said to the king: "Most excellent lord, I deem that you are mightily and with good cause astonished that I have ventured to come thus suddenly and confidently into your royal presence; nevertheless, when you shall have heard the real reason of my journey, you will not only cease wondering, but will be disposed

to pity me beyond measure. You, wise and exalted sovereign as you are, have received your heart direct from the hands of God, and will be able to understand well and truly how many and how great are the pains and the griefs which poor mothers must needs suffer when they hear how their sons have fallen into some untoward mischance, and especially those mothers who, as is my unhappy case, have only one son. My sorely distressed heart could find no rest nor peace. Therefore, having heard of your rare worth and divers wonderful reports of your high honour, I was so greatly heartened thereby that, led on by these reports alone, I have come thither; and standing now before you I implore and conjure you, by your God, for whose faith and honour alone you do battle, and by your virtue as a noble cavalier, that you will mercifully give me my only and beloved son. And albeit for such a boon no price would suffice, I, who am a woman, and by nature faint-hearted, have brought with me thirty thousand doubloons, which I beg you to accept merely as a remembrance of my visit, and which may serve to furnish some slight refection for your followers. Then I shall deem I have received, not only my son, but my very life as well, as a gift from you, and will promise that both he and I and all we possess—saving only our religious faith—shall ever be at your pleasure and command."

As she spake the king became more and more astounded at her wisdom and prudence and good faith; and what though he was urged by divers of his people to detain her, and thus capture at one stroke both her treasure and the rich equipage she maintained, nevertheless, harbouring none but virtuous thoughts, he determined that he would not, though he might win all the world thereby, do aught to put wrong or insult upon her. Wherefore, with courteous mien, he said: "Lady, your frankness in coming hither, and the praiseworthy reason thereof, have taken me so strongly that they have broken down the harsh design I had formed; so in brief I tell you I am willing to restore your son on these terms, to wit, that he shall, as soon as may be, return to my camp and serve under me in the campaign I have be-

gun, and should he fail through illness to do this, he must promise that at no other time will he fight against me or my people." The lady, after thanking the king, duly made answer with no little spirit: "Most serene king, I will be wary how I promise anything the fulfillment of which lies in the power of another; nevertheless, I will remain here as long as your majesty may need me to persuade my son to agree to your demand, and to keep his word. But you must get his own promise to your condition, seeing that the discharge thereof lies with him. But I doubt not that, if he should pledge his word, he will hold his promise sacred, even if death should be the issue thereof."

The lady's noble answer pleased greatly the generous king, and his esteem of her rose yet higher. After the Arab leader had greeted his mother lovingly and had conversed with her somewhat, she and the king likewise told him the terms of his release, and when he understood the same, he, turning boldly towards the king, said: "Most worthy lord, as I know that many words are no recompense for deeds, I will refrain from that grateful speech which is due from me in acknowledgement of the great boon which you are willing to grant me. Now it only remains for me to think how in the future I may show my sense of the same by some grateful act. Still, in answer to the last of your conditions, I must say that, as I was already bound by our own laws before coming under these conditions, I might find my country in such strait that I must, in order to perform my highest duty, take up arms on her behalf; and in such case I should fail to observe my promise made to you either wholly or in part. Therefore, God forbid that I should think of promising to do what by a possible accident might be frustrated. Besides this, if the gift of liberty is to be accompanied by any condition whatsoever, I should still deem myself a prisoner, for any worthy deed of mine would be judged both now and hereafter as done by compulsion and not by free will. Deign therefore of your goodness either to give me my liberty unconditioned, or let me wearily live out my life in my present prison."

The most worthy and illustrious king perceived that in virtue the Arab cavalier showed himself the equal of his great-souled mother; wherefore, himseeming that he was somewhat under obligation to them, and desiring that no noble deed on their part should outdo his own generosity, he said, without taking time to consider his reply: "I desire not that either one of you should tarry here, nor that you should leave any of your goods in pledge or give me any promise. Therefore, lady, take back the money which you brought hither and return home together with your dear son, because it is meet that I, as a king, should act generously, especially towards you who trusted me entirely, in that you put your person, your wealth, and your honour to the hazard in your long journey. It would, in sooth, be a shameful thing to fail in faith to one so trustful; nay, even after death, the disgrace thereof would endure, and the hurt ensuing therefrom to our crown, especially after such a prosperous reign, would far outweigh any profit arising from your death or the seizure of your treasure. And to you and to him I leave the choice of peace or war, whether or not you will take arms against me; for I hope, even without your son's aid, to bring my present righteous enterprise to a victorious issue." And having brought forth many and noble gifts, such as were worthy of his high estate and of their acceptance, he bade farewell to them and sent them back to their country with an honourable escort.

When they returned home no one of the Arabs, either in secret or in public, could believe this thing; it seemed, indeed, something beyond all human chance, and they all ran in great crowds to see the lady who had thus returned with her son. She never ceased to praise the wisdom of the king, Don Alfonso, or to commend his munificence and liberality and great virtues; wherefore an amazing number of the people, incited by the words of the lady and her son, were eager to show their goodwill to him; and Molefes, having collected a great army and treasure, went at the opening of the season with fifteen thousand horse and foot, to place the same at the king's service, without his having foreknowledge

thereof: When the king heard of this he was no less amazed than delighted, and having honourably welcomed Molefes, let him abide ever near his person, and treated him as lovingly as if he had been his own brother: And Molefes, being overcome afresh every day by gratitude, served the king all his life in love and loyalty; warring ever against his foes.

MASUCCIO

WISHING to ratify this novel in my exordium, meseems the three virtues therein dealt with may each one be compared to a rare and fragrant flower. And I will not refrain from celebrating the virtue of the lady because she was a Moor. She, albeit, moved by maternal love, still showed wonderful faith in trusting so fully the word of the Chrisitan king, the foe and the assailant of herself and of her religion; and, vastly unlike women generally, who are timid, greedy, and suspicious, she, by placing her person, her life, and her honour in the king's hands, will oblige us, whenever we may speak of the faulty and defective nature of womankind, to except from our censure this Arab lady. But I, unwilling to praise her so as to slight her companions, will affirm that the generosity of our lord the king may be put on record as great beyond measure. Again, as I know not how to rate the immeasurable gratitude of the Arab captain, that most noble gentleman, I will leave this task to those better qualified by Nature with discretion, who will know how to praise one without offending another. Then, still keeping to virtuous paths, I will exhibit another royal act of justice, one as worthy to be remembered as those already told, albeit somewhat severe.

THE END OF THE FORTY-SIXTH NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-seventh

ARGUMENT

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SICILY FINDS LODGING IN THE HOUSE OF A CERTAIN CASTILIAN CAVALIER, AND TWO OF HIS GENTLEMEN-IN-WAITING VIOLENTLY DEFLOWER THE TWO DAUGHTERS OF THEIR HOST. THE KING, HAVING HEARD OF THIS DEED WITH MUCH REGRET, MAKES THE TWO GENTLEMEN MARRY THE YOUNG GIRLS. THEN, THE HONOUR OF THE DAMSELS BEING RESTORED, HE CAUSES THE HEADS OF THE BRIDEGROOMS TO BE STRICKEN OFF FORTHWITH.

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, THE DUKE OF
URBINO *

EXORDIUM

IF the most eloquent and skilful orators are wont, when they speak before great princes and lords, to lose their wits and tongues alike, what wonder is there, my most illustrious lord, if Masuccio, all unversed as he is, should find his wits, his bodily powers, and all the instruments he employs, fall into confusion and travail so great that he cannot do justice to others or to himself whenever he is minded to write to your lordship, who by reason of your skill in arms and military discipline may be called the new Mars, and, over and beyond this, from your eloquence and learning are worthy to be hailed as another Mercury? And although I travel by devious bypaths I have determined to let favour my little work by calling upon your illustrious and excellent name; and this I do, not merely to satisfy myself

* Federico di Montefeltro, one of the most virtuous and magnificent princes of the time. For an account of him see Symonds' "Renaissance in Italy," vol. i., p. 105.

but to observe the promise I made to you, what time you sojourned on our Parthenopean shores, to visit you as a friend, during your long absence, by the sending to you one of those forbidden letters of mine, telling of a certain noteworthy and just deed—albeit somewhat cruel and unrelenting—wrought by a prince of the house of Aragon; so that you, who are an ensample of virtue to all living men, may give your approval to such righteous dealing by reporting and making mention of the same. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

AFTER the rich and powerful city of Barcelona had once more returned to the fidelity due to that distinguished sovereign, King Don John of Aragon, her rightful and undoubted master, the king resolved to wreak full vengeance on the French with respect to the occupation of Perpignan. Wherefore he bade come to help this enterprise that illustrious Aragonese prince, the King of Sicily, his first-born son, who in obedience to his father's wishes forthwith forsook all the pleasures of his Spanish court and the delightful company of his newly-wedded wife, and, attended by all his barons and knights, took the road appointed. As he passed through the divers towns and villages of Castile he met with joyful welcome everywhere, being honoured almost as if he had been the king himself. When he came to Valladolid, where they prepared in honourable wise a great triumph, no less on account of his high station than because of his lately-formed relationship, he found lodging in the house of a noteworthy cavalier, one of the chief gentlemen of the city, who, after he had made lavish preparations, so as to show clearly what honours and rejoicings were due at the coming of so mighty a prince, bade come to his house on the following day the greater part of the ladies of the city to make merry for the prince with all kinds of musical instruments and divers dances, and the fairest and most modest amongst

all these were the two young maidens his own daughters; who, by reason of their exceeding beauty, took the first place in the assembly.

On this account it happened that two Aragonese cavaliers, who were amongst the king's best beloved and highly favoured followers, fell hotly in love, each one of them, with one of the fair maidens aforesaid, in such wise that in a marvellously brief time they found they had sailed out into the sea of love, and that no contrary wind could have wafted them back into a haven of peace: Wherefore, having set their unbridled lust before all the honest obligations of reason, they finally resolved to reap the victory in their enterprise before they should quit this spot, even though it might cost them their lives; and, because the departure of their most worthy lord the king had been settled for the day ensuing, they agreed together to carry out to the full their wicked and iniquitous deed that very same night. After they had won over, by novel and very crafty working, a maid-servant of the gentleman's house, called by name Agnolina, who slept in the chamber occupied by the young maidens, and had bribed her with many gifts and still more promises, as is the custom of strangers, they came to an understanding with her for the carrying out of all that was necessary for their purpose.

The windows of the chamber aforesaid were very high above the street, wherefore their amorous ardour made them remember a rope ladder which they carried with them amongst their baggage—a contrivance they had used elsewhere for the scaling of convents—and it occurred to them that they might make use of this, because every other method seemed futile. At nightfall, having got in readiness everything necessary for their purpose, they went to the foot of the window, which had been carefully prepared for their entrance, and then, aided by the bribed waiting-woman, they attached the ladder to the window of the chamber wherein were the aforesaid damsels, secure as they deemed from all ill: Having clambered up one after the other and entered the chamber, which was wellnigh dark, they found the two damsels in bed, naked and uncovered, sleeping

soundly and quietly. Then when each one of them through the fierce passion which possessed him, had discerned which was the lady of his love, he lay down beside her and got himself in readiness to work his evil and villainous and most wicked purpose. Their presence did not entirely arouse from sleep the poor girls, and each one for a time believed she was sporting with her sister—as indeed it was their custom sometimes to do—and before they were sensible of what had in truth befallen them, they found that their maidenhead had been rapt from them by the most cruel fraud and violence; whereupon, stricken with wellnigh mortal grief, they cried out aloud and called for succour.

When he heard the noise and the great clamour made by them, their father came straightway to the spot, and after the whole affair had been duly set forth to him by his daughters, and he had discovered that the cavaliers had taken to flight, and that the ladder was still fixed to the window, it seemed to him fitting to make the waiting-woman disclose by means of dire threats and even of torments who these were who had thus torn in pieces his honour and good name. Then, when she had made full confession, and when he knew certainly what had come to pass, every reader may imagine for himself what was his grief when he tried to console his daughters, who had already determined to die a terrible death by their own hands. Next morning, howbeit the anguish of his mind had almost deadened his spirit, he went inflamed with rage to the chamber of the Sicilian king, leading his daughters by the hand, and spake thus: "My lord, may it please you to listen to a few words of mine, with which I will strive to chase away any base or unseemly suspicions which might perchance infect men's minds. I come hither, bringing with me the fruits which two of your most trusted followers, using the foulest ingratitude, have culled from the garden which I had trimmed so that I might do honour to you and to them as well, and for the permanent strengthening of my due and loving disposition youward;" and having thus spoken he gave full account of all that had occurred. When he perceived how bitter

was the weeping of his daughters, he too; mastered by the pity and the anguish which wrung his heart, was fain to break into a flood of tears. The king, who was very well advised and sapient, having listened to the words of the gentleman with the greatest grief and indignation, was so mightily overcome with rage and fury that he could scarce hold back his hand from dooming these two most execrable followers of his to a shameful death: But, having calmed himself somewhat, he concealed for a while the fell punishment which was the meet reward for so violent and unheard-of an offence, and, after consoling as best he could the poor father and his daughters, he determined in some measure to compensate them for their lost honour, and postpone for a little his vengeance.

On this account he put off his departure and forthwith commanded the Podestà to summon all the noteworthy folk of the city, women as well as men, to a fresh festival which he was minded to let prepare in the house of the gentleman. When the company had rapidly come together, and had been ushered into the great hall, the discreet monarch likewise entered, having on one hand the two damsels and on the other the two delinquent cavaliers, and, scarcely keeping back his tears, he made it clear to all present, point by point, the nature of the enormous offence that had been wrought: And because of what had happened, he desired, as some satisfaction for so detestable an injury lately wrought in that very place, that each of the cavaliers should take his ladylove to wife, and that each of the damsels should be granted a dowry of ten thousand golden florins. Whereupon all that the king had ordained was forthwith done, and the most illustrious and magnanimous sovereign at once ordered that the promised dowers should be paid in full to the damsels out of his own privy purse. Thus the grief and mourning which had possessed them heretofore was changed into the highest joy, and the merry-making became as merry again, and each one felt that the world was going better than ever before. Then the king betook himself to the great piazza of the city, and summoned to follow him all the nobles

and townsfolk, together with the lately-wedded cavaliers under guard; and, when the heralds had proclaimed silence, the king spake thus to the listening crowd: "Gentlemen all, seeing that I have reaped some small satisfaction by furnishing to this worthy and honourable gentleman my host, and to his daughters, certain remedies such as are permitted to me to use in cases of a nature like this—as all of you can and will ever be able to vouch—I wish next to give full satisfaction to justice, whom I am bound to serve in the first instance and beyond aught else in the world, for I would sooner die than fail in any act of duty towards her. Therefore let each one of you suffer patiently, and excuse the act I am about to perform, what though, in order to free myself from this righteous obligation, it may cost me a pang such as I never felt before." Having thus spoken, the king, without another word by way of sentence, called an attendant, who brought out two black robes long enough to reach the ground, and having made the two cavaliers don the same, he ordered that their heads should be forthwith stricken off, in the midst of this noble pageant; which thing was at once done, while all those standing anear wept bitterly. And afterwards the bodies of the two were given honourable burial by the folk of the town. Then the king desired that all the goods they possessed, real and personal as well, should be given to the two widowed ladies.

When all these commands had been duly carried out, before the feastings which had been so lately begun should be overborne by this new sorrow, the king determined to give these two damsels, now mightily rich, in marriage to two of the chief noblemen of the city; and thus the festival, upon which the hot and cold blasts of so many and divers accidents had blown, came to an end. The king went his way, reputed by all as a prince most illustrious in these our times for his virtue and munificence; and the damsels lived joyfully and prosperously in the married state with their new husbands, all the sufferings they had known hitherto being changed into the greatest happiness.

MASUCCIO

THOUGH we might tell of many and divers most illustrious deeds wrought by this prince in various places, still this one here related must be held as most noteworthy. And certes if the king was minded, following his obligation, to obey the precepts binding upon kings, he could not have acted otherwise, because the princes of this world have been instituted and ordained by God, and by Nature, and by laws human and divine, for no other purpose than the ruling and governing of the people, and for the administration of justice upon earth, that they may hold the balance even, and drive out of their breasts all love and passion and all hatred and rancour as well. Those who are gifted with such laudable virtues and worthy parts may justly be celebrated, not as mortal men, but as eternal gods; and those of contrary nature will leave behind them a fame equally immortal, not as just, wise, and prudent kings, magnanimous and liberal, but as iniquitous, depraved, and vicious tyrants, as the surviving memory of the good and of the bad daily testifies to us. Thus I, following rapidly the course I have begun, will, with God's pleasure, put an end both to the next novel and to what little remains to be done of my work:

THE END OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH NOVEL.

Novel the Forty-eighth

ARGUMENT

A SON OF THE KING OF TUNIS IS TAKEN BY CORSAIRS AND SOLD AT PISA. HIS MASTER GETS TO LOVE HIM, AND IN THE COURSE OF TIME SETS HIM FREE, UNWITTING WHO HE IS, AND SENDS HIM HOME, AND THE YOUNG MAN BECOMES SHORTLY AFTER KING OF TUNIS. SOME YEARS LATER THE PISAN IS TAKEN BY SOME MOORISH GALLEYS, AND IT CHANCES THAT HE IS, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, MADE A SLAVE OF THE KING, WHO, HAVING RECOGNIZED HIM, CAUSES HIS SISTER TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN, AND OUT OF GRATITUDE GIVES HER, TOGETHER WITH A GREAT TREASURE, IN MARRIAGE TO HIS FRIEND, AND SENDS HIM BACK TO PISA A RICH MAN.

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS LORD, JOANNI CARACCIOLO, DUKE OF MELFI *

EXORDIUM

BECAUSE I well know, my most illustrious lord, that not only is gratitude a passion innate in you, but that, in rewarding any service done for you, you excel all others in liberality and great-heartedness—as the guerdon given to me may testify to all men—I am disposed to dedicate this present novel, which deals with liberality and gratitude, to no other than your lordship, seeing that you are most worthy of the same. You, being a true judge of virtue, will be able to instruct others which of the acts I describe, ought to be published abroad with the highest praise.

* One of the leaders of the conspiracy of the barons. He was executed in the Castel Nuovo in 1486.

THE NARRATIVE

LAST year, while I was listening to divers tales of worthy deeds told by certain traders of note, I heard one told by a noble Florentine which set forth as a well-authenticated truth how, after the occupation of the island of Sicily by King Peter of Aragon, the Catalan corsairs used to harry without ceasing the Moorish coast; for which reason the King of Tunis, perceiving the daily hurt he got from these pirates, determined to build a fortified redoubt on a great rock called the Cimbalo, situated some miles out in the sea opposite Tunis, where he might maintain constantly a guard who would give signal by letting kindle a fire whensoever he might espy any galley of the Christians there lying hidden.

Therefore one day he despatched some well-armed ships, carrying many of his best-beloved chiefs, and artificers well skilled in such work, together with his first-born son, named Malem, to set in order the spot aforesaid: When they were anigh the Cimbalo, which was some miles out at sea, their ill-fortune brought upon them two Catalan galleys, which, by means of their oars, managed to get one on either side of the ships of the Moors, and, as well-trained falcons overcome their timid quarry, so the Moors, being unable either to fly or to defend themselves, and terrified to boot, were straightway seized. Malem, albeit a youth with cheeks still unmarred by the first down, was gifted with great prudence, and, having put off his royal attire, he disguised himself as a mariner. Together with the rest he was bound and sent on board the Catalan as an oarsman: The masters of the aforesaid galleys, having captured a vast number of Moors, determined to sail westward, where, taking with them the prey they had seized, they might best carry on their usual pillage. Having voyaged prosperously for many days they came to Ponza, and, being baffled and buffeted by contrary winds, they

were forced after narrowly escaping shipwreck into the Foce d'Arno. Finding themselves safe there, they sold at Pisa the greater part of their Moorish captives, and amongst these was Prince Malem, a delicate and seemly youth, and him they disposed of to a young noble of Pisa, called Guidotto Gambacorta, who, seeing that Malem was of gentle presence and about his own age, and being further more swayed by his kindly nature, was not minded to let Malem be put to any base employment. He had recently become very rich through his father's death, and, having arrayed Malem in certain of his cast-off garments, he kept him always by his side:

Remarking day by day how Malem's polished manners gave token of noble and worthy nurture, he assured himself that the youth must needs belong to the highest class amongst the Moors, and, holding this belief, he made it his constant care to give him a pleasant life and good usage. He perceived, too, that Malem had a keen and noble intellect, in that he had learnt the language of Tuscany in a very brief time; wherefore he determined to let him add to his other accomplishments a knowledge of modern Latin letters.* These the youth easily acquired; so that when three years had passed no one would have taken him for aught but a well-read Tuscan. For this reason, and for the others given, he gained so completely the love and favour of his master that Messer Guidotto regarded him as another self, and gave over to him, as to his own brother and most loyal comrade, the regulation of all that concerned his body and estate. On which account Malem—who was called Martino by his master—remarking how he had fallen into such excellent keeping out of the lowest depth of misery, was highly content, praising God for the same, and taking care every day to serve his master diligently; and, what though with the liberty granted to him he might have taken to flight when he listed, nevertheless, held back by the love springing from the many benefits conferred upon him, he never let the thought of such action find place in his heart. Wherefore Guidotto, to show him

* Masuccio here bears witness of the high repute of the contemporary Latinists.

the utmost proof of his affection, was fain to induce him to become a Christian, in order that he might be able to mate him with some well-born damsel, and to give him a good share of his wealth; so, having called him one day, he made clear this wish in becoming wise. To this Martino humbly answered: "My lord, when I call to mind my wretched condition what time you purchased me for mean service, and then survey the estate to which you, by your own innate goodness and virtue, and without any desert of mine, have raised me, I feel I ought not only to consent willingly to do this thing which you, acting with such love and kindness, desire for my weal, but even, should your needs demand it, to give you my very life. However, feeling that I ought not to keep secret from you any of my affairs, great or small, I would have you to know that, leaving the truth and the falsehood of our religion to the care of truth itself, I am not inclined to change my present faith for another, though refusal should cost me my life. Wherefore I beg you that, of your great virtue, you will not trouble my soul more with this matter; but if, to complete the good offices you have done me, you should deign to let me go to see my father, who is reputed as a great and noteworthy merchant amongst the Moors, I hope I may soon let you taste the fruits of his traffic and of my own to boot, to your very great satisfaction. But if you should incline to the contrary course, on account of the great love you bear me, be assured that I will never, while life is in me fail in my duty youward."

Guidotto, knowing the righteousness of Martino's disposition, and holding his words in no light esteem, felt no regret that he had bestowed upon him such great wealth and honour, and made answer thus: "My Martino, in some measure my deeds may have made it clear to you how I could not have loved any man more; or even as much, as I have loved you, even if such an one should have been bound to me by the closest ties of amity or kinship; and, if my request may have transgressed in a measure the bounds of right dealing, be assured that it sprang from naught else than the desire to unveil to you the inmost recesses of my heart. However, now

that I know your desire tends elsewhere, I bid you be of good cheer, for I promise you that in a very few days I will fully bring to pass your righteous wishes."

Martino, when he heard this most gracious reply, said, weeping as he spake: "My lord, because at present I find myself utterly unable to pay my debt of gratitude, I care not to be furnished with the power of expressing the same. I resign both the one and the other* into the hands of Him who is the rewarder of all good deeds, so that He may for my sake recompense you in such wise as may give you the greatest pleasure, and to Him I commend you and myself as well."

Guidotto, weeping the while out of tenderness of heart, embraced and kissed Martino, and then, after other fitting discourse, they took counsel together as to how Martino might take passage in the Pisan galley as far as Barbary. When everything concerned with the voyage had been set in order, when Guidotto had honourably furnished his beloved Martino with all gear needful therefor, and filled his purse with money, and heaped upon him divers gracious and worthy presents, he sent him home, both of them having shed floods of tears at parting. The King of Tunis meantime had caused a diligent search for his son to be made through a greater part of the west by renegade Christians and others, without getting any news of him, and now, when he beheld the youth standing before him well clothed and in honourable seeming, he was taken with a great access of fatherly love; for, as he had abandoned all hope of ever seeing his son again, his joy and satisfaction were all the greater. Wherefore, after he had bidden him welcome home many times, and had heard of all the adventures he had met, he sent commands to all parts of his dominions that everyone should rejoice mightily over the recovery of his son Malem, which thing was duly brought to pass. A little time after these feasts and rejoicings the King of Tunis, who was already very old, passed away from this life; whereupon the people, taking heed of Malem's great worth, and how he de-

* Orig., *l'uno e l'altro*, meaning presumably both the debt and the gratitude.

Novel the Forty-ninth

ARGUMENT

FREDERICK BARBAROSSA, HAVING DISGUISED HIMSELF, GOES TO VISIT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. THE POPE HEARING THIS CAUSES TO BE LIMNED A PORTRAIT OF FREDERICK, WHICH HE SENDS TO THE SULTAN, WHEREFORE FREDERICK IS CAPTURED, AND THE SULTAN BEFORE LIBERATING HIM DEMANDS AS RANSOM FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DUCATS. BARBAROSSA LEAVES IN PLEDGE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND HAVING RETURNED HOME SENDS THE PROMISED MONEY. THE SULTAN IS SO GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THIS INTEGRITY THAT HE RETURNS THE RANSOM, AND FRIENDSHIP HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE TWO SOVEREIGNS, THE EMPEROR AFTERWARDS CHASES THE POPE OUT OF ROME.

TO THAT EXCELLENT AND DOUGHTY GENTLEMAN, MATTEO DE CAPUA, COUNT OF
PALENA

EXORDIUM

EXCELLENT and valiant sir, the further time separates us from the gestes of old, the stranger must seem the narration of the same to new hearers, and as I am assured that many years have now elapsed since the following story has been duly told, I, having made it worthy of remembrance in future times by my rough penmanship, find great pleasure in dedicating it to you, who will take care that it be rated as a new story and a very true one both by present and future

generations; so that these, having duly scanned every part thereof—each by itself and all together—may unhesitatingly believe the same when considering the spotlessness of our unblemished faith. Farewell.

THE NARRATIVE

THE Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, being strongly moved by religious fervour, determined as a Catholic and a Christian prince to visit the sepulchre of Him who willed to die upon the wood of the Cross for the redemption of us all. Wherefore he began privily to prepare everything needful for his voyage, so that he might embark without letting aught be known of the same. However, he failed to keep secret his plans from the hearing of Alexander IV.,* who was at that time exalted to the supreme pontificate and the vicarship of Christ. The Pope, because the emperor was his bitter foe, determined in his wicked heart that in the course of this most devoted and praiseworthy pilgrimage Barbarossa should be captured and slain by the enemies of Christ. And, so as not to delay his project, he commanded a certain excellent painter, to whom he promised generous reward, to go and draw the portrait of the emperor of his own natural size; and when this was shortly afterwards brought to him, wrought in such perfection that it lacked only breath to be esteemed real and living, he despatched it by his own private chamberlain to the Sultan of Babylon, whom he further instructed as to the carrying out of his wicked and detestable desire.

When the chamberlain had arrived and had been duly introduced to the sultan, he said: "Most potent lord, my sacred master the Pope sends you information—albeit you are rated as the principal adversary of the Christian religion and faith, of which he, as the successor of Saint Peter, is chief ruler and guide—that the emperor, not satisfied with the dominion of the greater part of the West, is urgently seeking to occupy the

* A misprint for Alexander III.

East as well; furthermore, divers of the chiefs, his allies; have persuaded him to seize upon the Holy Sepulchre: And this thing he is fain to do, not because he is a devoted follower of the banner of Christ, but because he is a wicked tyrant, greedy and ambitious of the goods of others, fighting against you and all your kindred so as to make himself the lord over all. And for the reason that he has heretofore found all his plans come to naught, and has been treated with ridicule by the Pope, he has at last become sensible of his failure, and now seeks to satisfy otherwise his insatiable greed. He has already made mighty preparations, and gathered together many Christian warriors; and besides this, trusting no one else to give him full intelligence concerning your land and your power, he has determined to come hither in person, accompanied by two knights who are in his closest confidence, disguised in pilgrim's garb; indeed, he has already set forth on his journey, and he will shortly have achieved all he is bent to do. On this account His Holiness is not only desirous to warn you, so that you may prepare to resist his fury, but he has also sent you the emperor's portrait taken from the life, by the means of which, if you shall let all your guards, in those parts through which he is like to pass, make close examination of the same, you may doubtless lay hold of him without risk."

Having thus spoken the chamberlain gave the portrait to the prudent sultan, who, albeit he had received and listened to the embassy and the ambassador with pleasure, and had shown himself exceedingly grateful to the Pope thereanent—though he afterwards dismissed the envoy rejoicing greatly at the many gifts bestowed upon him—thought privately that this deed was a most heinous crime on the part of the execrable brood of religious clerks, and let it serve to confirm all he had hitherto heard, how the supreme pastor of Christendom and the greater part of his advisers were not only besmirched with pride and avarice and envy and unlawful indulgences, but were also filled with the most wicked and nefarious vices. Nevertheless the sultan believed fully the words of the ambassador, and deeming from

the aspect of the emperor's picture that he would prove to be a man of no little weight and worship, he forthwith gave directions to his officers as to the crafty stratagems they should use in ensnaring the emperor in case he should come thither. Furthermore he summoned all the pagan powers, and by vast expenditure of treasure he assembled a huge army, so that he might avert the dire shipwreck of his fortunes which was, as he deemed, being prepared for them.

When the emperor had set in order his affairs, and when himseemed that the time had come, he privily set forth on the journey which he had determined to make, taking with him two companions disguised like himself in marvellously cunning wise. After they had suffered great hardship, and discomfort of mind and of body also, both by land and by sea, they arrived at the spot where the foes of the emperor were impatiently awaiting his coming. He was at once recognized by means of his pictured presentment, and was without a word captured and led decorously into the presence of the sultan. Anyone may imagine how great was the sultan's pleasure, and although he received his prisoner somewhat sternly, nevertheless, when he considered his demeanour, he deemed that he must be a prince endowed by God and by Fortune with the highest gifts, and set him down as one wielding a power greater than he had hitherto dreamt of. Then he caused the emperor to be carefully guarded within the palace, and to be served with all the diligence due to his rank, and after a certain time he bade them bring him once more into his presence, and graciously inquired wherefore he had journeyed thither thus secretly. The emperor, who was no whit dismayed at his capture, answered with boldness: "Sire, as I have hitherto let pass my life in feasting and pomp, and in the delights and splendour and empty flattering of the world, I determined at last to do my duty towards God, and, for the saving of my soul, to journey through the midst of many and great perils and afflictions, to the lowly spot where the Son of God and Universal Redeemer lay sheltered awhile after He had been slain by the Jews. And although this praiseworthy desire of

mine has come to an untoward issue, I do not now, nor will I ever repent me, even though I should suffer thereanent not one but a thousand deaths, that I have shown myself the servant of Him who for my sake underwent death and agony, and have, in a measure, discharged my debt to Him."

The sultan at once knew by these words that he had judged aright from the outward seeming of his prisoner; wherefore he gave fuller belief to his upright and reasonable discourse than to the false and sinister intelligence, the fruit of blind envy and cruel hatred, which he had received from the Pope, and he straightway determined he would act magnanimously in this matter. So, turning towards the emperor, he said: "The great God, who knows everything and can do whatsoever He will, will bear witness on my behalf how, I having heard by report of the fame of your many virtues, felt myself mightily constrained to love you, and possessed by lively desire to work your pleasure; therefore, if you had deigned to take of me security and pledge of faith as to your coming hither, as was fitting for your dignity and state, then of a surety your great longing to visit these parts would have proved a pleasure to both of us. Nevertheless, things having fallen out in contrary wise—peradventure by the decree of Heaven—I am fain that you should find in me, whom you regard as your foe, a kindlier spirit than that which subsists in the heart of the chief ruler of your faith."

Having thus spoken, he showed to the emperor the portrait, and related how it had come to him, setting forth clearly how the Pope had sent word that he should not fail to compass the death of the original thereof. Then he said: "Although you may have come thither deeming yourself a conqueror, and are nevertheless fallen into my power and brought before me as a victim—although I might be avenged on my enemies through my enemy—I prefer to restore to you both your life and your liberty: Still the fact remains that, when I heard news of your coming, I laid out a mighty treasure in preparing to withstand you and in qualifying myself for attacking other foes; wherefore I have deemed it just that, as a return

for this great boon of mine youward, you should pay me five hundred thousand ducats as some part of the money which I have spent in vain. When I shall receive this sum I will not only give you your liberty, but will likewise furnish you with a safe-conduct to your own land." As the emperor had been amazed beyond measure at hearing of the treacherous and wicked workings of the most iniquitous Pope—or rather of the precursor of Antichrist—so was he in equal degree delighted at the wellnigh incredible virtue of the sultan's nature, and that the affair was like to come to a joyful issue, seeing that the sum named appeared to him naught but a trifle. Therefore, after he had thanked the sultan for his great and unexpected liberality, and after they had discoursed together concerning the vice and adulteries of that shepherd of souls, who in sooth had become a greedy and rapacious wolf, he said: "Most worthy lord, although I looked upon the ransom you have asked of me as little greater than nothing, still I do not see, if I remain here, how I can possibly let it come hither; because, as soon as the report thereof might become known in Christendom, many men, both in Italy and in the lands without, desiring my downfall, would be stirred up by the counsel and favour of the Pope, and under the plea of feigned charity they would quickly seize upon my empire and all my treasures. Thus, not only would your design miscarry, but I likewise must perforce remain here a private person in captivity. Therefore, for the sake of your great worth, may it please you to complete the good work you have begun, by the only possible course, and I, besides my pledge of faith, will leave with you as a hostage and security another Lord incomparably greater than I myself am—by this I mean the most sacred body of my Christ Jesus: By it I swear to you that, as soon as I shall be come to my home, by the goodwill of the Lord aforesaid, I will send you without delay the whole of the debt I promise to pay, and will hold myself and all that belongs to me in everlasting bond to you."

The sultan at once understood the true and unfeigned arguments of the emperor, and he pondered much over

the high value which the Christian prince seemed to set upon a little wafer made of bread and changed by the word of the priest into the body of Christ. This thought, indeed, worked in him so strongly, that it made him abandon any other plan he might have formed to gain this treasure, and persuaded him to accept the said pledge, not on account of any covetous desire for the money itself, but simply from the wish to behold so mighty a proof of the faith of these same Christians. So he answered briefly that he would agree to whatever might best please the emperor himself; whereupon everything was carried out according to the directions of Frederick. Now, as the business demanded speedy despatch, they summoned forthwith a minorite friar; and after he, in the presence of them all, had consecrated the body of Christ with much devotion and with the wonted ceremonies, they placed the same within a tabernacle most delicately wrought, and then the Christian emperor handed it with the greatest reverence to the care of the sultan, shedding many devout tears the while. Having once more ratified the vow which he had made, the emperor a few days afterwards returned as secretly as he had come.

When he had reached home, he spent much thought over the mighty boon which he had received, and having ordered certain galleys to be equipped with all despatch and caused to embark therein his honourable embassy, accompanied by a chaplain who was a very devout man, he sent by them to the sultan the five hundred thousand ducats of new coinage with a new device stamped thereon. In due time the ambassadors arrived at Alexandria and were conducted into the presence of the sultan. Their weighty and honourable mission being now accomplished, they handed over to the sultan the money, and begged him of his kindness that he would restore to them the pledge which he held. The sultan, who had received the envoys in friendly wise, and had marvelled within himself at this perfect good faith, at once caused the tabernacle of the body of Christ to be brought forth; whereupon the chaplain received the same with deep reverence, and administered the wafer to himself in the

presence of the sultan and of his mamelukes and of the other courtiers. When he saw what was done the sultan was more than ever astonished, and, almost dazed with wonder, he said to himself: "In sooth, there is not in all the world another man to match this perfect friend I have lately gained." Wherefore he not only esteemed the power of the Christian faith to be most mighty, but likewise he judged the emperor to be a man of the loftiest soul, inasmuch as he had paid so high a price for a little mouthful of bread to be eaten by one of the meanest of his chaplains. Then, turning towards the ambassadors, he said: "God forbid that any sum of money or treasure should prevail to make me work any offence, or to mar by any act of mine this new friendship of ours. Wherefore go back to your lord, who is mine as well, with the money you have brought, and commend me to him, and say that, since it is his will to cultivate in his soul such great virtue, I desire that he should dispose of me and of all that is mine, as he may best please in everything, except he should require me to retain this money (which might, in sooth, remind me of him for a season), for I desire that the example of faith shown by him should stand for good as his ransom. Moreover, as I possess no pledge so valuable as that which he left with me for the fulfillment of his promise, I must employ the best I have and send him my first-born son, not as an hostage, but as an earnest and for the strengthening of our renewed friendship, and so that the emperor, who may be styled the one man of perfect virtue in all the world, may impart to my son his own excellent way of life and courtly bearing. Then, when it shall seem good to him, let him send the youth back with his morals regulated and well versed in all good manners."

Whereupon he made them bring forth a great quantity of his richest and most precious jewels, and these he sent with the returned ransom and his own son to the emperor, bidding the ambassadors likewise bear words of tenderest affection from him to their lord. After this the young man, who was received by the emperor with the highest honour and with feasting, lived at the court for about three years, and was treated as if he

were Frederick's own son, and in due time was sent back to the sultan learned in letters and accomplished in divers gifts and virtues, and with no small store of presents. Having done this the emperor—in like manner as he determined to repay the benefits he had received from the sultan—resolved to punish the ill turn which the Pope had done him. Wherefore he marched against the Pope with a great army and much treasure, and—not for mere vengeance, but rather as a chastisement, and as an everlasting example to posterity of such great treason and jealousy—he drove the Pope out of Rome with all indignity, and let him die in poverty and the greatest misery in the hospital at Siena, in such wise as a vile priest ought to end his days.*

MASUCCIO

FORASMUCH as I could not in my discourse, nor in writing with my pen, censure enough the malignant nature of this Pope of times past which I have lately set forth—so completely do the reprobate lives of our present Popes afford us visible testimony of the same—I intend to keep silence entirely concerning the former Popes and their successors as well, seeing that it would be a superfluous and unnecessary trouble to point out in a few particulars a thing which is manifest to the entire universe. For which reason I will put a bridle on my tongue for good thereanent, and will refrain from speaking not only of the wicked and monstrous crimes which they commit both in public and in private, of the offices, the benefices, the prelatures, and the scarlet hats which are put up to auction at the deaths of the holders thereof, but likewise I will make no mention of the cap of the Prince of Saint Peter, which has been made the subject of barter and exchange. For this reason nothing else suggests itself to me, as an unworthy Christian, save to implore without ceasing the great majesty of God not to regard the defiled and corrupted

* Alexander III. died at Civita Castellana in 1181.

lives of such pastors as these, but rather to look upon the simple faith and prayers of the flock. We, too, being strengthened in the integrity and the perfection of the true faith of Christianity, and taking example from the virtuous conduct of the Moorish sultan and the most Christian emperor, may, as it behoves us, commend them as noble and praiseworthy to others. And, after I have added to the tales already told yet another one telling of a wonderful instance of virtue, I will, according to the desire I have long felt, say a last and pleasing farewell to my Novellino.

THE END OF THE FORTY-NINTH NOVEL.

•

Novel the Fiftieth and Last

ARGUMENT

A CASTILIAN CAVALIER, A FAVOURITE OF THE COUNT D'ARMAGNAC, SERVES THE KING OF FRANCE, AND IS MADE FIELD-MARSHAL. THE DAUGHTER OF THE COUNT BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HIM, AND MAKES HIM THE OFFER OF HER PERSON, WHICH OFFER THE CAVALIER, OUT OF HIS GREAT VIRTUE, REFUSES. WHEREUPON THE COUNT IN GRATITUDE GIVES HIM HIS DAUGHTER TO WIFE, AND THE KING MAKES HIM A GREAT LORD.

TO THE MAGNIFICENT AND VIRTUOUSLY
GIFTED SIGNOR BUFFILLO DE LO JU-
DICE, A NOBLE PARTHENOPEAN *

EXORDIUM

I REMEMBER, most generous and magnificent Buffillo, that you were not merely the first awakener of my sleeping intellect, but that it was through you chiefly that I am now come to be remembered by reason of my writings as an immortal amongst mortals. Wherefore, as I have in this last part of my Novellino dealt with that most worthy quality of gratitude, it seems to me only just that, if I show myself duly grateful for all the fruits culled from that fertile garden of yours, I ought not to be written down an ingrate. Accept, therefore, in your long absence, this my last novel, telling of the virtuous deeds of certain outlanders, in order that you, a most noble Parthenopean, who have made of yourself a voluntary exile, may, while reading the same at your leisure, be reminded somewhat of Masuccio, whom once you held so dear. Farewell.

* This gentleman seems to have been one of the Angevin nobles who joined the revolt at the beginning of Ferdinand's reign, and subsequently withdrew to France. *

THE NARRATIVE

DURING my recent searches for stories of worthy gestes, I was told not long ago by a noble stranger as truth unquestionable that some time ago in Toledo, a notable city of Castile, there lived a cavalier of ancient and noble family, called Messer Piero Lopes d'Aiala, who had an only son gifted with much grace and comeliness and a gentle nature, and called by name Aries. As it often happens, the youth, in company with certain of his companions, was unwittingly involved in a midnight riot, when, being forced to use blows in his defence, it chanced that he slew with his own hand a noble youth, a dependent and a favourite of the king. Wherefore, fearing amain the king's wrath—albeit the nature of his involuntary deed would have warranted a defence on his part—he resolved to adventure in other lands, not being minded to tempt the extremes of Fortune. So, having taken leave of his father, he set forth with two horses and a few attendants, and as much money as his haste would allow him to collect hardly knowing whither he fared. But having heard that a deadly war was raging in France between the French and the English, he resolved to go thither in order to make a test of his valour; and, after he had joined the army of the King of France, he, as fate willed it, hired himself as a man-at-arms to the Count d'Armagnac, the captain-general of the army and a kinsman of the king. Aries, when he had received the wage due to him for this humble service, laid out the same, together with the money he had brought with him, in arraying himself as best he could, and began to bear himself bravely, not only in the throng and bloodshed of battle, but likewise in the storming of cities and castles, and in every other affair concerned with a soldier's calling; and the renown of his name increased so mightily that he was no less a pattern of valour and prowess to

the French than he was a terror and alarm to his foes.

Thus he gained the favour of his own captain in such wise that he was regarded by the aforesaid as another self, and the king's love towards him waxed so greatly that he was numbered amongst the most honoured and highly favoured warriors of that most powerful host. Wherefore the king made him a knight and field-marshal with much honour, and having granted him great increase of wealth, he took him still further into favour, so that, whether overthrowing his adversaries in battle or capturing their strong places, himseemed that he must always have his Aries by his side. While Aries was enjoying this high estate and honour which he had won by his valour, the winter season came on; whereupon the king, according to necessary usage, sent his army into winter quarters, and betook himself with the greater part of his comrades and knights, together with the freshly-promoted youth, to Paris. After the lapse of a few days, wishing to make some joyous festival over the victories he had gained, the king summoned a great multitude of his barons with their ladies to the merry-making he had prepared, and amongst the first of these came the Count d'Armagnac with his only daughter and an honourable following. Now, after the joyful and sumptuous feast had gone on for several days to the delight of all the guests, it came to pass that the daughter of the count aforesaid, as she outshone all the other ladies in wit and beauty, was minded to exhibit like talent in the selection of a valorous lover. Thus, having noted the youth and comeliness as well as the worth and good repute of the Spanish knight, she became so fiercely enamoured of him that if she did not see him, or hear report of him, some hour or other of the day, she would perforce spend the night in vexation and weariness of mind.

And because she knew no one to whom she could with safety entrust the story of this fierce passion of hers, she herself gave him to understand by divers signs; some secret, and some wellnigh plain to everybody, that she was melting and consuming with desire for him. He readily gathered the purport of these signs, being

well versed in the service of Love; and, albeit she seemed marvellously beautiful in his eyes, he, for the reason that he ever kept in sight the graven record of the many benefits he had received from his lord her father, determined as far as a lover could to drive away all thoughts of enjoying her, either now or in the future. And being set in this virtuous mind, he made cunning pretence not to understand the passionate looks and the other allurements of the amorous damsel, whereby he vexed her daily with bitter grief and weeping. Thus she, deeming that he was now become most careless of her and cruel to boot, held counsel with herself how she might by means both sure and easy, cause him to enter the lists of love of his own free will. So she took paper and wrote thereon a letter to him so feattly expressed and full of passion that it might have moved to pity a heart of marble, much more the soul of the youth she loved, ending this epistle by saying that she had already chosen to die a violent death unless this great delight should be granted her.

Having sealed it and given it to a little page in her service, she instructed him to whom and in what fashion it should be delivered. The page, albeit he was very young, had a man's head on his shoulders, and divined at once that this letter must needs be concerned with something unseemly; so, disregarding the command given to him, he straightway went to his master and let him know of the letter and whither it was to be taken. The count opened the letter and read it, and I will let those gifted with noble hearts, and the foes of wickedness judge how great and of what nature was the heavy and heretofore unknown grief which possessed him when he learned how unbridled and criminal was the appetite of this girl, his only daughter. And being in this cruel case, he quickly canvassed the various means he might prudently employ in letting fall upon his wicked daughter due punishment, and before deciding to follow any one of the courses aforesaid he resolved that, as he had discovered to his intolerable grief how incredibly wicked this girl was, he would likewise see a final proof of the virtue and the perfection of the good cavalier, and then

allow himself to be led by the issue of the affair. Thus, having carefully reclosed the letter and given it back to the page, he bade him carry out the lady's orders and take the note to Messer Aries, and when he should have received the reply thereto to bring the same to him forthwith. This service the page discharged with diligence, and was graciously received by the cavalier, who, when he had mastered the terms of the letter, made up his mind inflexibly to let virtue be his goal, although he had—while considering the many amorous propositions hitherto made to him—weighed well in his mind what meed of good or ill fortune might befall him on account of this answer.

Therefore, borrowing strength from his virtue, he took paper, and after answering honestly all the arguments of the lady's letter, he ended by saying he would rather suffer any violent death, than stain in aught the honour of the count his master either by thought or deed. But being wary of the wicked practices natural to the vile sex of women, he was unwilling to vex her too much, because when these artful creatures find themselves repulsed and despised by their lovers, they are wont in their rage to strike savage and deadly blows. So he consoled her with certain cold hopes which could never be realized, to wit, that he would give her his heart and become her husband with her father's full consent, but not otherwise. He realized clearly the difference of their positions, and could say no more than these words, which she must accept, or banish all thought of him; for, when he considered the honours and the advancement he had received from her father, neither her great beauty, nor her exalted rank, nor her wealth would ever prevail to make him let stain the fair fame of her father. And after he had sealed the letter and given it to the discreet little page, he awaited with no slight travail and disquiet of mind whatever ill fortune should befall him thereanent.

The page took the answer back to his lord, who wisely fathomed the purport of the same, and felt his former anger and heartfelt sorrow grow less, as he gathered assurance of the virtue of the knight he loved so well;

in sooth, he was so powerfully moved by this humour that he was fain not only to shower fresh honours upon the young man, but likewise to let pass from his mind all stern thoughts of punishment, and to become kindly and clement and generous towards the daughter he loved. Being firmly set upon this praiseworthy purpose, he went straightway to the king, without saying a word either to his daughter or to anyone else, and after he had told the whole story from its earliest beginning to the point it had now reached—not forgetting the new purpose in his mind—he begged the king graciously to pronounce his judgment on the question, and what he would wish to be done thereanent. The king, who was a wise and very prudent prince, did not rate the thing he heard to be any new trait in the evil and wicked nature of woman, but he was astonished and even confounded at the great constancy and strength of mind of the knight, and esteemed his virtue and seemly carriage more than hitherto. After they had discussed many and divers matters bearing on the question, the king persuaded or even commanded the count to carry out their latest formed and most praiseworthy project without farther delay. Aries, having been summoned, came forthwith, and when they were met together the king said: "Our very dear Aries, seeing that from the first of your coming hither to serve us under the count, you have shown by divers honourable deeds and by your courage, moderation, and prudence, how great is your bodily valour, there remained naught for you to do, to prove yourself the supreme exemplar of uprightness to all the world, except to let us see the hidden strength and the unrivalled virtue of your soul. Now, as you have given us a most commendable instance both of the one and the other, and as furthermore we owe to you our lives and all that we possess, it seems that we are bound, not only by duty and right-dealing, but also by the claims of your deathless virtue both in peace and in war, to bestow upon you such a reward that our gratitude shall be held worthy of praise, and you yourself be kept in eternal memory by all present and future generations."

Having spoken thus, and likewise told Aries all that had been done in the matter of the letter of the count's daughter, and her proposal, and his reply thereto, and all other things which had come to their hearing concerning the same, he went on to say: "In sooth, we ourselves, and the count as well, understood perfectly that the last expedient in your letter, touching a possible alliance which you held out to the lady, was only caused by fear lest you should leave her entirely distraught with anger; for you must have known that through disparity of blood this same was a thing not to be done. Nevertheless, if Nature had let you be born a noble, and Fortune a rich man, you, adorned as you are with your other excellent parts, might well have won as your wife a lady of a degree far higher than this one. Therefore, as you have had a great part in gaining victory for us in opportune wise, and have let great honour befall our well-beloved count thereanent, we have agreed together by an immutable decree that, after making up all the aforesaid deficiencies of yours as some reward for your renowned worth, we will give you this high-born and beautiful damsel to wife, as she so ardently desires, what though you may have held the same to be impossible." And when the king had spoken, the count with many gracious words gave full confirmation, and, almost weeping through tenderness of heart, embraced and kissed the young man and called him both his son-in-law and his only son. The discreet cavalier was as amazed as he was delighted at this good news, and could think of naught else to say than: "My lord, albeit I know quite clearly that the power of your Majesty is so great, and that the virtues of the count, my former master and now my father, are so widespread that they might together exalt me to a still higher pitch of honour and glory, the knowledge that I myself possess of my own demerits, is so sure that, even as it is impossible for me to express the thanks due to you, so it seems unmeet to me that I should in honesty and in duty accept so exalted a position. Therefore I must leave it to the wise consideration of your Majesty and his lordship, to make excuse for all I lack in one respect and another, and, holding my

high position neither from fortune, nor from any merits of my own, but only through the kindness of your Majesty—undeserved and graciously bestowed as it is—I will as long as I shall live speak of myself as your own ransomed slave and the meanest servant of my lord the count.” And when he had kissed the sovereign’s feet they gave over talking of the matter.

The magnificent king, so as to let the affair come to an issue with all celerity, straightway commanded that a great feast should be prepared in the royal palace for the following day; which thing was done at once. And a great company of barons and knights and ladies and other noble folk having assembled there according to the king’s desire, the joyous festival began without letting the damsel or anyone else know the reason thereof. When the feast was at its height the king caused the count’s daughter—who was no less fair by nature than by her adornment—to be led into his presence, so that she might be seen of all; and after the heralds had proclaimed that Messer Aries had been made captain of the army and Count of Foes—that country being without a lord—the lovely damsel was joined in marriage to the new count in the midst of this memorable pageant. Wherefore the double feast was yet farther prolonged, and the joy and gladness of everyone waxed greater. After a short lapse of time, when the various causes which had brought about the recent event were made known, the king and the count and the lady and the cavalier won marvellous praise from everybody, individually and all together. After many days had passed, and the festival had come to an end, it pleased the count that the newly-married couple should retire to their dominions; whereupon they departed thither, after having been sped on their way by the king with many sumptuous gifts. When they arrived at their home they were welcomed by their people with the heartiest goodwill and with feasts and rejoicings, everyone being delighted at such joyous doings. It seemed, however, to the newly-made captain, that as a dutiful son he ought to invite his father, Messer Lopes, to share his high estate and fame. And when he caused him to be conducted

thither under honourable escort at a fitting season, everyone will be able to judge how great and of what nature were the joy and gladness, filled full with love and charity, which fell upon all three of them. Now, letting them abide in such great happiness, I will for the future have done both with the writing and the telling of novels.

MASUCCIO

BECAUSE nowadays virtue is fain to lie prostrate on the ground, and to be rated of little or no value by princes, and to get for reward naught but ingratitude, it seems to me that, when we hear tell of any deed of gratitude wrought in old time, it should be written down and noted, not only as an act of virtue, but as a supernatural thing—a testimony of which we may find in the dealings of the King of France and the Count of Armagnac with the worthy Castilian knight, and the advantage which arose therefrom. But as the boons bestowed and accepted were the source and origin of the virtue afterwards displayed by Messer Aries, and at the same time opened and pointed out to him the path he should take, I deem that he who initiated the matter ought to win our highest praise; then it may be left to the discreet consideration of the reader or hearer to decide to which of the virtuous deeds aforesaid should be given the foremost place. Still, it cannot be denied that, albeit the cavalier was perforce somewhat ungracious towards the lady, the proof he gave of his constancy thereby was a marvellous one, seeing that by sheer force of virtue he overcame his desires in thus refusing such illustrious solicitation, and in considering only how he might do justice and honour to the count his master, as has been fully set forth already. But as it is now time for me to give rest to my wearied brain, forasmuch as I have finished the fifty promised novels, it only remains for me to give a last God-speed to my

beloved Novellino. Having done this in brief, I, now that I have escaped shipwreck, will cast anchor in port, and henceforth will live the life of a shepherd of the woods who has no sheep to tend. Farewell.

THE END OF THE FIFTIETH NOVEL.

Masuccio

TO HIS BOOK

HAVING now by God's mercy come to the end of the task set out and undertaken by me, and having brought to a fortunate issue the special and much-desired object I had in view, it seems to me full time, and a matter of duty also, to send you, my humble little book, into the presence of that lady on whose behalf I undertook this labour, which proved to be almost more than my feeble wits could endure: And know for certain, my Novellino, that she is not only illustrious by reason of her extraordinary virtues amongst ladies now abiding upon earth, but is even worthy to be yoked together with the celestial goddesses: Wherefore let me specially exhort you to present yourself before her with all humility, and, after you shall have kissed her snowy and most beautiful hand, to offer yourself to her without any other conveyance on my part. Then, when you, lying at her feet, may have commended me to her mercy, take care that you forget not to beg her, of her especial grace, that she will not hold it irksome to accept you as the most trifling of gifts: But if, peradventure, you should perceive that, because of your mean presence, she should receive you with a disdainful face, remind her that I am well assured she must have read formerly in some excellent history in the Greek tongue* how Xerxes, the most glorious sovereign of divers kingdoms, and lord over myriads of men and vast heaps of treasure, was one day riding through his dominions, accompanied, as was due to the state of so mighty a prince, by a goodly number of nobles. As he journeyed he came to the ford of a river, and by the river's brink there was a labouring man ploughing in his master's field with his master's oxen: To him some-

* A delicate compliment to the learning of the Duchess Ippolita.

one cried, "Behold the king!" The poor fellow remembered that there prevailed in former days a very ancient custom by which everyone, the first time he might catch sight of the king, should make him some offering, this man a trifling one, that man a rich one, according to the faculty of each. Thereupon the poor man, because he was void of any means of performing this deed (which was his duty) of honouring the King, and of acknowledging his superiority, was suddenly overcome by a marvellous reverence and affection which flowed from the very core of his heart, and, having left his oxen, he ran with hasty steps and cast himself into the river, in the midst of which he at that moment beheld the king. Then, holding his hands close together, he took therein a handful of water, and went towards the king and said: "My lord, in me there is neither gold nor silver, nor any other thing which I might offer in dutiful service to you, and acknowledge you as my king and lord. I have naught besides this drop of water which you may see in my toil-wearied hands. Take it, therefore, I implore you, with cleanness of heart, like that which I feel in offering the same, and know for certain that if Fortune had given me more I would have made in becoming fashion the offering which is your due."

The benevolence displayed by the king was indeed marvellous; for, like a true gentleman of nature, he did not think it beneath him to bend down and to touch with his delicate mouth the coarse and muddy hands of the countryman, the tiller of the soil, and to drink the water therefrom, taking no regard of the quality of this trifling gift, but only mindful of the true affection of the giver. Then, having thanked the countryman for his love, he rode on and went his way, God speeding him.

Thus, as soon as you shall have brought back to the lady's memory the instance aforesaid, on the strength of the authority here produced, tell her once more—albeit I am well assured that to the loftiness of her generous and exquisite spirit even the most sumptuous gift must needs appear mean and niggard—to deign to consider, not the imperfection of your nature, but rather

the depth of the affection of him who has ventured to despatch you to her. Furthermore, beg her that, with the benevolence she uses in treasuring up little things, she will place you amongst the number of those which she has collected, and, for some brief time at least, to keep in memory Masuccio, her most devoted servant. And now, because I am persuaded that, if you carry out duly and sufficiently the directions aforesaid, you will meet with kind and joyful reception at the hands of this same serene star, it seems to me meet and proper, and even necessary, for me to instruct you soberly how you must needs pass the residue of your days with all those who may become intimate with you and read your pages.

In the first place I am fain that you should never take it upon yourself to persuade, or to beg, or to constrain anyone to read you; by obeying me in this you will not let those lengthy and not very enticing novels of which you are made up, a work of clumsy composition and uncouth speech, bring irk and regret to those readers who may find them distasteful. But to all such as may read you of their own free will, you may lay bare every secret, with all the pleasure in the world. Still you must be wary, for it is most certain that there will come across your path divers murmurers to whom the faculty of fine speech has been denied by Nature, who, on the other hand, allows them to heap censure upon virtuous men by means of their own vices. These, in sooth, will be eager to crucify me for what I have written against the honesty of womankind and the wicked life of false professors of religion. See, my Novellino, when you answer such as these, that you are wary in your words, and tell them in brief and weighty speech that whatsoever I may have written concerning women was nothing more in comparison with what I might have written, than the taking of a tiny drop of water out of the vast ocean—and of the truth of this thing the greater part of women can bear witness, the one to the other: But with respect to the reprobates under religious vows—who without doubt will come to blows with you—take care you reply to them boldly, and say that you

cannot see how reason can demand, or honesty allow, that those who neither lead the life nor follow the ways of men vowed to religion, can, or ought to be held or to be called religious. For if we take into account the great mass of open sins and crowning acts of wickedness and ribaldry which they have committed in the past, and, as must be plain to anyone who inquires, still commit every day that passes, we may justly write them down and call them naught else than ravening wolves, or rather soldiers of the great Satan himself. Wherefore, if I have spoken at length, but yet not enough, concerning such as these, no one can rightly cast reproaches upon me; and certes, if I had been sure that men would have taken my meaning, I would have called these wretches not men of religion, but rather ministers of Satan.

Therefore let those men of true and perfect religion remain in their hallowed solitudes, holding the faith which approves itself to them, for against such as these I never have and never will presume to utter a carping word. Nay, rather I would say once more what I have always said heretofore, to wit, that those who dedicate themselves entirely to the service of God, and to the pure and most gentle ministrations of our divine religion, flying from the world and its treacherous snares, out of which they have of their own will withdrawn themselves, should not only be honoured and loved and accepted as religious men, but should likewise be duly praised and esteemed by us as blessed ones and saints in their lives, and in their deaths as well, seeing that they may with infallible truth be called the adamantine columns and the eternal support of our Christian religion and faith.

Wherefore let these words be a sufficient answer for those who, standing afar off, make me a target for their poisoned arrows. But if they should still answer that I, not being their rightful judge, cannot be expected to know aught concerning their failings, nor how to draw distinction between the good and the bad, and that whatever has been found sufficient for the rest of mankind now living upon earth should be sufficient for me, be steadfast, O Novellino! and answer boldly that, be-

cause some of the nefarious deeds of these manglers and destroyers of religion have become the subject of common talk, it has seemed to me that, for the sake of God, and nature, and decent manners, and on account of the good men amongst those vowed to religion, it ought to be allowed to me, by distinguishing as above, to exalt the perfect and to damn the evildoers, in order that other men may not hold that all religious persons are defiled with the same pitch—a contention which has been clearly and sufficiently dealt with by me, truthfully and with due justification, in your first part.*

To meet these just and valid arguments, since they cannot and know not how to answer the same, they will at times have recourse to the words of those vile women who declare that they shall see justice done upon me at the day of judgment. If, however, they deem they can smite or harm me by such blasphemy as this, see that you answer them, without farther concern, that I; on my part, neither seek nor wish for longer time to elapse before the coming of that universal judgment in which we shall all be rewarded or punished according to our good or evil doings.

Coming after such as these, I trow, you will find others of a sort far less malignant, who will affirm that, of the fifty novels out of which you have been compounded by my hands, the greater number are naught but fables and lies. Let it therefore please you tell these that by such discourse they come not near the truth, forasmuch as I now invoke the most mighty God as my witness that all these stories are verily true, and for the most part deal with matters which have come to pass in these our days. Those which are arrayed in antique garb, and are as it were the greybeards of fiction, have been confirmed as real and true histories, what time they were told to me by personages of the highest authority.

Thus, while you both oppose and make answer to the many and various arguments, which may be advanced against the conclusions you seek to establish, you will prove an excellent and abiding protection and shield to your Masuccio. But do not marvel if I send

* Page 9 vol. i.

you forth on so momentous a journey meanly clad and stained with tears, seeing that you must surely know of the recent cruel stroke, the bitter and bloody misfortune which has been to me the cause of lasting sorrow and never-ceasing tears. Go your way, therefore, weeping, with your garb transformed and with new aspect; and until you shall have duly come to your destination, and shall have carried out the commands given to you, do not cease from letting fall your tears; because, with regard to your author, the sun is eclipsed, the moon obscured, the heavens, planets and stars bereft of their eternal light. Dead is that gracious and comely gentleman, that illustrious, rare, and magnanimous lord, the most serene Roberto, Prince of Salerno, the great and most skilful admiral of this kingdom of ours, now widowed and shrouded in gloom. Weeping the while, I can say of him, with unquestioned truth, that worthy generosity has been chased away into perpetual exile; that Death, cruel monster, with rapine and violence has put out the light of charity; that the poor will now miss their consoler, and the strong fortress of the needy is no more; and, lastly, that the gates of the common house of shelter for worthy gentlemen are closed for ever: Weep, therefore, my Novellino, since he is now dead through whom letters, both in Latin and in the vulgar tongue, were lifted to great honour; through whom military discipline in action, in the council chamber, in the royal jousts, and in the sumptuous games of Mars, was exercised with the most studious care, and through whom the fierce wild beasts of the forest were put to flight in the chase and the various birds disturbed from their haunts. Cry out aloud, therefore, my poor Novellino, forasmuch as this sublime prince in his death has let die justice as well, seeing that he was wont to administer the same with so great integrity that now justice itself, and truth as well, seem to be hidden, and every happy virtue felled prone upon the earth. Cry out with a loud voice, "O glorious prince! where is now your elegant and thoughtful eloquence, where is your marvellous wit, your wide range of vision, your excellent judgment, and the perfect counsel and advice which you

were wont to deal out with such true balance and prudence, both in important business of public weight and in the slightest private affairs as well, treating each in fitting wise?" Thus, weeping the while and lamenting that I myself was ever born into the world, do not thou cease at all from letting the present generation, and posterity as well, know how, my life having failed me by reason of this dark and sudden stroke of death, I am now unable, as I had formerly determined, to add to you many and divers other niceties and noteworthy matters. Thus this unlooked-for and almost violent death has caused me of my own will to unstring my lyre and to sacrifice, before its appointed time, the exhausted pen dedicated to Mercury, in such fashion that, having imposed an eternal silence upon myself, I may never suffer myself, as long as my bitter life shall last, to write again of things merry or pleasant or jocund. In this wise, therefore, take your last farewell of Masuccio, leaving him weeping and mourning and arrayed in the garb of woe. Farewell.

THE END OF THE NOVELLING.

Notes

THE FIRST NOVEL.

The source of this story is probably the fabliau, "*Le Sacristain de Cluni*," by Jean le Chapelain (*Le Grand*, iv. 252). It has parallels in almost every European language. Heywood, in his "*History of Women*," gives one called "*The Fair Lady of Norwich*." This story is repeated in Bloomfield's "*History of Norfolk*," Sir Thomas Erpingham figuring as the avenging husband. "*The Knight and the Friar*," one of George Colman's "*Broad Grins*," is a metrical version of the story as given in Bloomfield. Both of these strongly resemble Masuccio's novel.

It occupies the thirty-first chapter in the English "*Gesta Romanorum*," and in the "*Seven Wise Masters*," History XIX., is a medley of this story and "*The Three Hunchbacks*." Kirkman, a contemporary of Heywood, has left a translation of "*The Seven Wise Masters*," called "*Erastus*," and substitutes in this story a lawyer for the monk. The oldest English version is probably the metrical story of Dan Hew, Munk of Leicester.

THE SECOND NOVEL.

In a work by Pontano, "*De Fortitudine*," Lyons, 1514, there is a dialogue between Charon and certain unhappy spirits, and one of these, a woman, tells an experience of hers somewhat resembling Madonna Barbara's. Compare also Bandello, iii. 15, which is the same as a story in Josephus, xviii. 4.

THE THIRD NOVEL.

The fabliau, "*La Culotte des Cordeliers*" (Montaiglon, iii. 275), is probably the source of this novel and also of Sacchetti's CCVII. It also occurs in Sabadino and in Poggio, CCXXXII. A modern version is given in "*Les Contes Remois*."

THE NINTH NOVEL.

H. Stephanus in his "*Apologia pro Herodoto*," lib. I., c. 21, tells how in the mountainous parts of Dauphiny and

Savoy the friars were wont to persuade the peasants' wives to feign themselves possessed in order that they might enjoy the task of exorcism.

THE SEVENTEENTH NOVEL.

There is a story like this in "*Comptes du Monde Avanteux*." An abbreviated translation is given in Painter's "*Palace of Pleasure*," No. LXVI. Marston's "*Dutch Courtesan*" is derived from the same source.

THE TWENTY-FIRST NOVEL.

The first story in the "*Pecorone*" is the same as this novel. Painter's version ("*Palace of Pleasure*," No. XLVII.) is a translation from Ser Giovanni. "*Aleria*," a novel by Giovanni Francesco Loredano deals with the same subject. It is to be found in a volume called "*Choice Novels and Amorous Tales*, written by the most refined wits of Italy," London, 1652.

THE TWENTY-THIRD NOVEL.

This novel is a variation of the story of *Œdipus*, and is probably the most repulsive extant, inasmuch as the mother is the instigator of the crime and all along cognizant of her offence. In Dunlop's "*History of Fiction*," vol. ii., p. 219, there is a note dealing with the parallel histories which are found in every literature. An instance not there given is one shadowed forth by an inscription on a tombstone in the parish church of Martham, Norfolk. It runs as follows: "Here Lyeth the Body of Christ^o Burraway, who departed this life ye 18 day of October, Anno Domini 1730, Aged 59 years. And their Lyes [—] Alice, who by hir Life was my Sister, my Mistres, my Mother and my Wife. Dyed Feb. ye 12, 1729, Aged 76 years."

THE TWENTY-NINTH NOVEL.

The opening of this novel resembles History XIX. in the "*Seven Wise Masters*," and the conclusion is evidently taken from the same source which supplied Chaucer with the subject for the "*Miller's Tale*." No editor of Chaucer, except Mr. Skeat, has detected this parallel story.

THE THIRTY-THIRD NOVEL.

The earliest form of this story, and the one accepted by certain writers as the source of Masuccio's novel, is the romance of "Anthia and Abrocomas," by Xenophon Ephesius, a Greek writer who lived probably during the time of the Antonines. This story is extant in MS. at Monte Cassino and in several printed editions. The principal editions of the text are Vienna, 1796, Haarlem, 1818, and one in the "Corpus Scriptorum Eroticorum Græcorum," Leipzig, 1833. It has been translated into Italian by Salvini, into German by G. A. Burger (Dessau, 1782), into French by P. Bauche (1736) and J. B. Jourdan (1748), and into English by Rooke (1727). There is likewise a reference to this romance in the "Miscellanea" of Angelo Poliziano, cap. li. The story aforesaid contains the central situation of the plot, the simulated death of the heroine, but in many details it differs essentially from Masuccio's rendering, notably in the episode of Anthia's separation from her husband and capture by robbers, from whom she is rescued by one Perilaus. It is to escape from marriage with this deliverer that she takes the drowsy potion.

In the "Illustrations to Shakespeare," Mr. Douce, who apparently did not know the version of the story given in the "Novellino," remarks, when writing of the origin of "Romeo and Juliet," that although the story of Xenophon Ephesius had not been printed, Luigi da Porto might very likely have seen the same in MS.; but it is doubtful whether he would have been able to read it even had he come across it. He himself, in an epistle attached to "La Giulietta," tells how he first heard the story "from an archer of mine whose name was Peregrino, a man about fifty years old, well practised in the military art, a pleasant companion, and, like almost all his countrymen of Verona, a great talker," and Bandello, in his version of the story, also affirms that he heard it from a Captain Alessandro Peregrino, whom he met at the baths of Caltero.

The fact that Peregrino was a Veronese may be held to be the reason why the venue of the story was laid in the city of the Scaligers, and why the Montagues and

Capulets, as two of the leading families there, were chosen as the principal agents. It was a favourite practice with the Italian story-tellers to place the scene of their narrative in some place interesting to themselves or to their hearers. Masuccio has done this with reference to this same story by laying the scene in Siena, the city of the nobleman, Antonio Piccolomini, to whom the novel is dedicated.

Masuccio's rendering and Shakespeare's have one point in common, and therein differ from certain of the others, namely, that the lovers never meet again alive after their separation.

With regard to the suggestion of the plot to Masuccio, it is highly probable that he may have heard the story of Xenophon told by some one or other of the Greek scholars who flocked to Italy after 1453.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH NOVEL.

"Le Meunier d'Aleus," a fabliau in Montaiglon's collection, is an early form of this story. There are parallels in Sacchetti, CCVI.; in Poggio, CCLXX.; in the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," No. IX.; in the "Heptameron," No. VIII., and in La Fontaine, "Les Quid, pro Quo." It is probably the same as the sixth story of the third day of the "Decameron."

THE FORTY-FIRST NOVEL.

From the exordium to this novel it appears that Francesco Galioto, to whom it is dedicated, gave the subject thereof to Masuccio. According to Costanzo, "Storia," lib. xx., Giacomo Galioto returned to France with John of Anjou after his defeat by Ferdinand, and it is quite possible that this may be some kinsman and companion in exile of the aforesaid. Bonaventure des Periers wrote a story on the same subject (No. 128, "Contes ou nouvelles Recreations"), using probably the same legend which Galioto heard and sent to Masuccio. An episode in "The Little French Lawyer" (Beaumont and Fletcher) is something like the principal one of this novel.

THE FORTY-NINTH NOVEL.

This novel is a version of the same legend which is set forth in an old German popular tale, entitled, "Ein wahrhaftige historiï von dem Kayser Friderich der erst seines namens, mit ainen langen rotten Bart den die Wahlen nenten Barb; derselb gewan Jerusalem unnd durch den Babst Alexander den dritten verkuntschafft ward dem Soldanischen Kunig der in gefenklich hielt etlich zeyt. Un wie der Pundtschuch auff ist khomen in Bairn." Augspurg, 1519.

In the British Museum there is a translation in MS. of the same novel as told by Masuccio by Henry Parker, Lord Morley, dedicated to Henry VIII. in the following terms:

"To the most high most myghty and most Christen King Kinge Henry the eight by the grace of God King of Englonde Fraunce and Ireland Defender of the faith and in erthe supreme hede of the Church of England and Ireland your most humble subiecte Henry Parker knyght Lord Morley desireth to your highness pptual honour helthe and victorye.

"Scenek wryteth in one of hys epystles that he wrote to Lucilus (moste gratiouse and most deare soveraigne lorde) that faythe is the sure fundation of mans breste. And albeit that as sum dyvers clerks wyll that he knew not the verei true faithe but as other philosophers that by natall reasone affyrmeth that there must neades be one God that must rule and gouverne all. Yet as I do suppose that he coulde not have wryten so truly of faith onelless he had had sune perticular knowlege of Chrystes teachynge by Saincte Paule as the greate Doctoure saincte Jherome affyrmeth. But lett it be so that he ment it nothyng to the faythe of God but onely that faithe the whiche a man oughte to kepe one man to another yet surely the sentence is worthy allwayes to be pryntede in our hertts for who so ever he be pore or ryche that observeth not hys faithe fyrste to hys superiour next to hys frendes and thyrdly and generally to all men. What is he to be reputed but (as Isope saith in hys fables) a

very fox that promyseth frenshyppe and love to small lytle beastes to noone other intent but for to devoure theym (farre from an honeste chrysten man so false a condition) but if it be in a poore man so ascendynge up to the greatest of all in ungoodely and ungodly wyse what it is to be counted in a spyrytual man that by faithe and by his worde dothe consecrate in forme of breade the moste blessyd body of God. And not onely hymselfe to be unfaithfull but further to goo aboute to devoure and to murder the faithful servaunt of God as that false antecriste Alexander IIII bysshope of Rome dyd as this lytle hystory declareth to the moste chrysten and moste noble firederyke barbarouse Emperour of Rome whyche saide hystory for as muche as that youe my most redoubted and moste graciouse Sovereignte Lorde hathe bene in lyke factyon unfaithfully unjustly and falsely by dyvers and sundry tymes by Paule bysshoppe of Rome with all fraude possible to disturb your moste godly and moste faithfull wayes I thought it shulde not be unpleasant to your highnes yf so were that ye dyd votesafe to reede it to se the ungodly faction of the ungodly bysshoppe the true faithe of the goode Emperor the great nobleness and liberalite of the Sarrasyn Souldan of babylon declared and tolde by Massuccyo Salerytano in hys Novells or tales whiche he wrote in the Italyan tongue so excellently well that I thynke in noo tonge it can or may be amendyde. Nevertheles as my poore lernynge is I have translatyde the same (as your hyghness mya perceyve) into our natural tonge. Whiche if in any pointe it dothe content you my moste Christen sovereigne Lorde It shall not onely rejoyce my verey herte but further encourage me as my moste bounden duety requyreth to pray to Criste Jesu send youe thys yere to cum and all your yeres after perpetuall helthe vycctory and honour wyth your noble wyfe Queen Katheryn and that hope of this your realme to cum prynce Edward youre sonne that after infynyte of yeres in thys worlde ye may cum to that kyngdome that ever shall endure. Amen."

THE END.

fashion, declaring, however, that if he might go clad and carrying his sword in his hand he would willingly do what they wanted. Now Filippo had travelled all the way from France to foregather with his ladylove, and, in considering the difficult pass to which they had come, he perceived that his friend was speaking and that the lady was acting with good show of reason; so, after many and divers arguments, for the reason that the lady remained firmly fixed in her purpose and that he himself was more than ever fired with amorous desire, he besought Ciarlo almost with tears that, by the bonds of friendship, he would consent to oblige them, what though the thing itself might be unseemly. Therefore Ciarlo, seeing how great was the passion which possessed his friend, and to what a pass the affair had come, determined that he would if need be meet death itself rather than be wanting in service to Filippo.

Thereupon the waiting-woman taking Ciarlo by the hand led him in the dark to the lady, and she, having given him kindly welcome, took him into her own chamber, and there bade him take off all his clothes and get into the bed, keeping his sword at hand. Then she softly bade him be of a good heart and have patience, for she would soon return and release him. This done she went full of joy to her Filippo, and having led him into another room they reaped the full and delightful fruit of their desire. Now when Ciarlo had waited, not two,* but four hours, he began to think that it was full time for the lady, or at least for his trusty comrade, to come and set him free; so, hearing no one coming, and perceiving that it was near daybreak, he said to himself, "If these others, all afire with love, feel no concern at having left me here to play a fool's part, it is now full time for me to take thought of myself and of my honour." Having softly got out of bed, him seeming that the lady's husband was asleep, he went with the sheet over his shoulders to try to escape, but was hugely annoyed at finding the chamber door securely locked outside; and, not knowing where the windows were, nor

* Orig., *Non che dove ore ma quattro aspettato*. The Salernitans use *dove* for *due*.

on what place they looked, he went back to the bed in a fury. He heard sounds which told him that the other occupant of the bed was awake and moving, and, though he was pricked both by fear and curiosity, he kept aloof and spake not a word. While he was thus troubled in mind he marked through the fissures of the windows that it was now broad day, and, fearing amain lest he should be espied by his bed-partner, he turned his back, and, gathering himself together and keeping his sword ready for his needs, he resolved to leave whatever might befall him to Fortune and kept still, mightily troubled in mind.

Before long he heard sounds of the fires being kindled throughout the house, and the hasty steps of the servants as they ran to fetch water; wherefore he determined at the last rather to die as be seemed a good cavalier than to be found there stark naked and making shift for a woman; so, having leapt out of bed with his drawn sword, he went to the door, and, as he was using all his force to open the same, he became aware how someone was unfastening it from without. He drew back somewhat, and then saw enter Filippo, laughing heartily and holding the lady by the hand. The two straightway began to embrace him in merry wise, albeit they saw he was bursting with rage. But when the lady perceived that he was all bemused, and unwitting where he was, she took him by the hand and said to him: "My good sir, by the sincere love I bear towards you, and also by that which you have towards certain others, I will assure myself that I may speak to you concerning a matter which intimacy such as ours will allow us to discuss. I know not whether Nature may have failed to bestow upon you French gentlemen that which she always gives to the lower animals. I mean to say that I know of no male beast, whether wild or tame, which, when under the sway of love, will not recognize the female by her odour. And you, forsooth, a wise and discreet gentleman, who have come hither all the way from France on account of love, can it be that your frozen nature is so sluggish that, when Fortune lets you spend the whole of a long night by the side of her for whom

